



"OI HAVE FOUND IT!" YELLED JERRY. "OI HAVE FOUND THE TREASURE!"

# BURIED TREASURE

A Tale of An Old House

BY

#### EVERETT MCNEIL

AUTHOR OF "THE LOST NATION" "THE TOTEM OF BLACK HAWK"
"THE CAVE OF GOLD" "IN TEXAS WITH DAVY
CROCKETT" ETC., ETC.



NEW YORK
DUFFIELD AND COMPANY

1919

Copy 2

AND Buya

Copyright, 1919, by

DUFFIELD AND COMPANY

OCT 16 1919 V

©CLA536188V Recorded

## CONTENTS

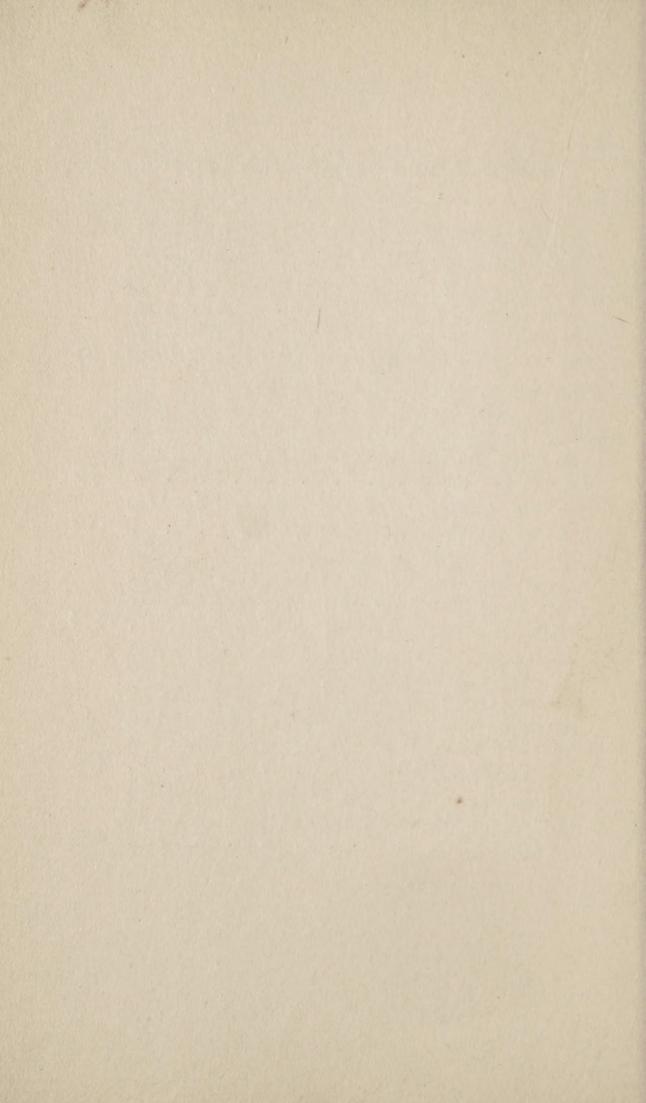
CHAPTE	R	PAGE
I	On the Great Council-Stone of	
	THE DEAD CHIEFS	3
II	Promised Excitement	20
III	A QUAINT OLD HOUSE	30
IV	THE SECRET TREASURE-VAULT	37
V	THE MYSTERY OF THE BURIED TREAS-	
	URE	44
VI	THE TORN PARCHMENT	48
VII	The Ghost-Room	55
VIII	THE PITIFUL TALE OF SWEET LITTLE	
	KITTY WYNDT	59
IX	Тне Gнозт	65
X	THE ROOM OF THE SECRET PANELS .	76
XI	THE MAGIC POKER	82
XII	Signs of Trouble	93
XIII	THE MEN IN THE RED AUTOMOBILE	102
XIV	The Rival Mascots	118
XV	THE HUNT FOR THE SECRET TUNNEL	128
XVI	A Wonderful Mascot	138

#### CONTENTS

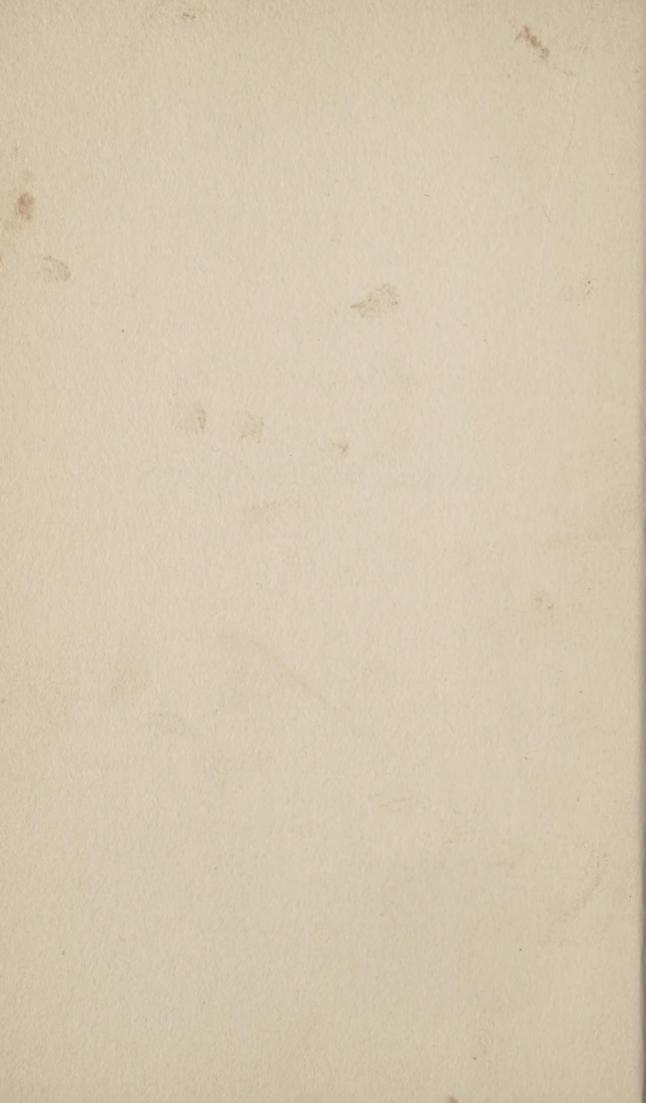
CHAPTER		PAGE
XVII	"IF WE COULD ONLY DO SOMETHING	
	TO HELP MRS. ROSEWOOD"	150
XVIII	WHAT CAME OF THE VISIT TO DEAN	
	ALTON	158
XIX	THE OLD DIARY	170
XX	THE OLD CHIMNEY	185
XXI	How the Mascots Helped	195
XXII	THE BURIED TREASURE	205
XXIII	DEAN ALTON AGAIN	219
XXIV	ALL IS WELL THAT ENDS WELL .	229

### LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

FACING	PAGE
"Oi have found it!" yelled Jerry. "Oi have found the treasure!" Frontispiece	
"The house looks to-day just about as it did when General and Mrs. Knox stepped out on its long porch to welcome General Washing- ton, as he dismounted from his horse".	26
"Say, but wouldn't that roof make a dandy to- boggan-slide in the winter?" and Ray's eyes followed curiously the long, slanting roof that ran from the high peak down to within a few	20
feet of the ground	32
"Oh, but look over there!" cried Williamina. "There are the ruins of something"	120
"But," and Williamina hesitated, "you—you surely do not mean me to keep this precious little book that your own great-grandmother wrote when she was a little girl, do you?".	178
"You see, you start from the keystone in the east end of the arch of the bridge and measure off just as many feet as it tells you to, in the di- rection it tells you to, and you will come to a flat rock, and buried six feet under this flat	
rock is the treasure"	204
The long-buried treasure of Mrs. Rosewood's	
long-dead ancestor stood once more on top of the earth	210



## BURIED TREASURE



### BURIED TREASURE

#### CHAPTER I

ON THE GREAT COUNCIL-STONE OF THE DEAD CHIEFS

Some two miles back from the west shore of the beautiful Hudson River and a little more than five miles southwest of the old historic town of Newburg lies Boulderland. Rugged hills and thicket-overgrown woods surround Boulderland; and great, oblong, oval, round and flat boulders, some of them as large as houses, thrust their weather-polished bulks atop the ground, like the half-buried skulls of huge antediluvian monsters. Around and across it run many stone fences, weather-stained and moss-overgrown, and through it flows Silver Stream, its pebbly, boulder-strewn bottom crooked as a snake's trail, down to where an ancient dam swells its

waters into a small pond, thence under the arch of an old stone bridge and on down into the wooded depths of The Glen, where it tumbles its waters over huge boulders, through a deep ravine, until they finally join the sullen flow of Murderer's Creek.

Here, on the broad bosom of a great flattopped boulder, was born, one summer's day, the Boulder Club, the happy thought of a dozen happy girls and boys out for a stroll through its pleasant fields. They, this Happy Dozen, were not natives of Boulderland, but came from the great city to the south, where huge walls of bricks and stone take the place of trees and singing birds, and where the soft cool ground and the fresh green grass never touch the feet of those who walk its streets. Because of this, Boulderland was a wonderland to them, with many mysteries awaiting their solving and many hidden nooks to be searched out and explored; and, on this summer's day, accompanied by Aunt Betty, the only grown-up in the party, who was to be their friend and counselor during their stay in the country, they had started out to explore the Field of the Great Stones in the northern part of Boulderland; and, after many joyous wanderings about, had come to the great flattopped boulder.

"Let us rest here on the top of this huge boulder," suggested Aunt Betty, whose legs were beginning to tire. "I fancy it must have been the council-stone of Indian chiefs in the long ago; and we, too, will make of it a council-stone. All in favor of the suggestion make a rush for its flat top."

There was a whirr of knickerbockers and dresses, the clatter of shoes on the hard rock, a shrill yell or two and girlish shrieks and laughs; and the Happy Dozen had settled down on top of the great boulder, like a flock of fluttering birds.

"Unamimous," declared Aunt Betty, as she seated herself in their midst. "Now let us see if there are any lost, strayed or stolen. Constance, one," and she began counting slowly, her eyes twinkling merrily as they glanced over the bright faces of the restless little bodies that clustered around her. "Ethel, two; Williamina, three; Jennie, four;

Mildred, five; Ruth, six; Gladys, seven; Ila, eight; Ray, nine; Arthur, ten; George, eleven; Jerry, twelve—Glory be, not a-one strayed, lost or stolen!" and a smile joined the twinkling eyes. "Now, let us get down to the business before us, which was to hold a council on this ancient council-stone of the red men—"

"But, do you really think that the Indian chiefs once sat on this very stone and smoked their peace-pipes, while they held their councils?" Ray interrupted excitedly, his eyes glancing curiously around.

"It certainly would make a splendid council-stone," declared Aunt Betty; "and there is no reason why the Indians should not have made use of it for that purpose. But, let us have a look at its center. You know, if the chiefs held their councils here, they would have sat and smoked their pipes around a fire; and we might find some marks of the fires on the rock, even after all these years."

'All now, especially the four boys, began an eager examination of the center of the flat top of the huge boulder; and, to their delight and

satisfaction, they found, or fancied that they found, faint traces of these prehistoric fires in a slightly blackened little hollow near the center of the stone. This was considered ample historic proof, at least by the boys, that the Indian chiefs had often lit their councilfires here; and the huge, flat-topped boulder was at once christened the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs.

"Now, let us build a fire in the hollow and seat ourselves around it, just as if we were Indians," suggested Ray. "Then we can hold our council."

Ray's suggestion was eagerly adopted, and soon a fire was burning briskly in the little hollow of the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs, with the children squatted around it in true Indian fashion.

"Warriors and-and squaws," and Aunt Betty arose and stood, as if infolded with the dignity and the blanket of an Indian chieftainess, "we have lit the council-fire and have formed the council-circle and are now ready to listen to such words of wisdom as the Great Spirit sends to His children. Open your lips that we may hear what is in your hearts," and the stern Indian-chieftainess-like eyes twinkled.

"Seems to me," began Ethel, her eyes sparkling with animation, "that, since we are all to be here for about three weeks, we ought to organize ourselves into a club or something, so that we can do things better. I—"

"Bully!" broke in Ray, half jumping to his feet in his excitement. "That's a bully idea. Let's form a club, and—and call it the Red Sons and Daughters of the Forest, or something Indian."

"Silly! We aren't red, at least I'm not," and Mildred's dark eyes snapped, "and we aren't Indian, nor sons and daughters of Indians, and we do not live in the forest. Now," and the thought wrinkles gathered on her forehead, "I—I—O, let's call it," and her face brightened, "The Busy Bees' Golden Circle! Now, don't you think that's a perfectly beautiful name?"

"Punk! Perfectly punk!" and the downward gesture of Ray's fist showed his disgust as plainly as did his face. "The Busy Bees'

Golden Circle! Phew! Sounds like an old maid's missionary meeting."

Mildred's face flushed; but, before she could speak, Aunt Betty pressed one of her hands warmly.

"Never mind," she whispered. "I am sure the thought behind it was lovely, even if the name isn't exactly suited to our club. I knew a number of girls who formed a club and gave it a name almost exactly like that; and they were some of the loveliest girls I ever knew."

"I think," suggested Williamina, "that, since there are so many boulders all around us, it would be fine to call our club the Boulder Club."

"Splendid! Splendid!" and Constance clapped her hands together delightedly. "And we could always hold our meetings on a boulder. I move that we name our club the Boulder Club."

"Anybody second the motion?" inquired Aunt Betty, smiling.

"I do"-"I do," cried Mildred and Ray, almost in one voice, both anxious to show that they bore no ill will because the names they had suggested did not suit.

"You have all heard the motion. Any remarks? If not we will put the question. All those in favor please yell, Aye!"

"Aye!" yelled every one, at the top of his or

her voice.

"The motion is carried unanimously, and the name of the club is, therefore, the Boulder Club. Now, you will need a president, a vice-president, a secretary and a treasurer."

"I move," and Constance jumped nimbly to her feet, "that we now proceed to the election of officers by ballot." Constance had belonged to the High School Literary Society and she was now putting some of the parliamentary knowledge there acquired to use.

The motion was promptly seconded and carried; and, in a moment more, all began scratching away with their pencils on the paper ballots that had been handed to them, all except Jerry, the little red-headed Irish boy, whose eyes were staring a little blankly and wonderingly at the face of Aunt Betty.

"Oi write the name of the wan Oi want to be prisidint on this paper?" he inquired doubtfully. Jerry had been in America only a few months and some of the brogue of the "ould sod" still clung to him.

"Yes," smiled Aunt Betty, "just write the name on the slip of paper and drop it into my

hat."

"Shure," and Jerry's face brightened. CIT know wan foine prisidint."

Aunt Betty now passed the hat around and collected and counted the ballots.

"Twelve votes have been cast," she announced, when the count had been completed, "of which Constance receives seven, Ethel three, Williamina one and-and-" Aunt Betty paused and held up the last ballot where she could study the writing on it closely. Suddenly her face broke into a smile. "And Teddy Roosevelt one," she concluded.

"Thot is him! That is him!" and Jerry, who had been watching excitedly while the last ballot was being examined, jumped to his feet. "Teddy shure would make wan foine prisidint. My father says-" But here the yells of laughter that greeted his words caused him to sit down very suddenly, while his eyes stared around the circle of laughing faces in wondering astonishment that soon changed to wrath, which Aunt Betty was quick to notice and to mollify.

"Jerry," she said, swiftly straightening out the smile on her own face, "your voting for Teddy Roosevelt was great; and shows that you have already caught the American spirit. But we were only voting to find out which one of you girls or boys should be president of the Boulder Club, not who would make a good president of the United States."

"O-O-O! Oi see," and the look of wrath left the face of Jerry and his mouth broadened into a grin. "Oi vote for the wan Oi want to be prisidint of the Boulder Club. Bully! Oi vote for Williamina."

Again everybody laughed and Williamina's face flushed just a little; for, ever since her kind hands had so tenderly bound up a finger that he had cut while making her a willow whistle, the little Irish lad's loyalty to her had been bounded only by his opportunities;

and had subjected her to just a little teasing from her companions.

"That gives Williamina two votes, but it still leaves Constance with a majority. Therefore, Constance has been elected the first president of the Boulder Club; and I will now take upon myself the honor of escorting her to the presidential chair, which," and Aunt Betty glanced around, "of course, must be a boulder. I will delegate you four great boys to get the president's chair and to place it where it belongs," and, pointing to an oblong boulder about as large as the largest watermellon you ever saw, which lay a few feet away from the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs, she nodded to Ray, Arthur, George and Jerry.

In another minute the strong arms of the four boys had lifted the boulder and had borne it to the place of honor near the council-fire; and the president's chair was ready for the president.

Constance, as was befitting the one receiving all these honors, blushed, stammered out a few words of appreciation and then pro-

ceeded with the election of the other officers, with the result that Arthur was elected vice-president, Williamina secretary and Ethel treasurer.

"Now, I think we ought to have a committee, or something, to think out interesting things for us to do," suggested Mildred.

"No speaking pieces!" exclaimed Gladys

hastily.

"Nor writing essays!" added Ruth.

"Of course not," declared Jennie. "Who wants to speak pieces or write essays up here? We get all we want of that at school."

"But, what shall we do?" queried Wil-

liamina.

"That's what we want a Thinkout Committee for—to tell us," explained Mildred.

"Miss President, would it be in order for me to make a few remarks?" smiled Aunt Betty.

"Certainly," answered the president.

"I agree with Gladys and Ruth," began Aunt Betty, "that we do not want any speaking or essay writing; but something that will interest and amuse all of us, with lots of fun

mixed in with it. Now that Thinkout Committee seems to be just what we need to get that sort of program; and, therefore, I move that the president be instructed to appoint three members of the Boulder Club to act on such a committee; and that it shall be the duty of this committee to think out some interesting thing for the club to do for the part of the day remaining after each business session is held."

"Second the motion!" shouted Arthur.

"You have all heard the motion, any remarks?" queried the president.

"Miss President," and Ethel arose a bit embarrassedly to her feet, "we want Aunt Betty on that committee."

"Sure," agreed Ray. "She could think out more things to do in a minute than the rest of us could in a week."

"Thank you," and Aunt Betty smiled her appreciation of Ethel's and Ray's good opinion; "but it seems to me that you young folks should hold all the offices and fill all the committees. Of course, I shall be glad to help you all that I can in every way that I can."

"I know what we will do with Aunt Betty," and the president smiled. "We will make her Adviser Extraordinary and Counselor Plenipotentiary to the Boulder Club."

"Make her what?" and Ray scratched his head and stared open-mouthed at the president. "Bet you can't say that again, Con—Miss President, so that it sounds the same."

"Order!" Order!" laughed Aunt Betty.
"The question, Miss President, let us have the

question."

"If there are no further remarks," and Constance glanced as threateningly toward Ray as the grin on her face permitted, "we will put the question. All those in favor of the motion, please say, aye."

"Aye!" cried all.

"Carried unanimously," announced the president, without waiting to put the contrary vote. "Now," and Constance smiled and looked at Ray, "shall we make Aunt Betty Adviser Extraordinary and Counselor Plenipotentiary of the Boulder Club?"

"Bully for you! You did it!" and Ray grinned his approval. "But, are you sure

Aunt Betty can stand being made all that?"

"O, shut up!" laughed Constance, forgetting her presidential dignity for the moment. "Anybody make a motion to that effect?"

"Miss President," and Williamina rose slowly to her feet, as if the thought of the linguistic feat she was about to attempt almost overpowered her, "I move that we make Aunt Betty Ad-adviser Extra-a-or-dinary and Counselor Plenti-po-po-"

"Plenty potatoes!" suggested Ray kindly.

"The thing you said," and Williamina sat down, her eyes sending indignant flashes at the face of Ray.

The motion was seconded and carried unanimously; and Aunt Betty became Adviser Extraordinary and Counselor Plenipotentiary to the Boulder Club.

"Any further business?" inquired the president.

"I think we ought to have a club yell," and George jumped to his feet. "Something that will let everybody within hearing distance know that we are the Boulder Club, when we yell it."

"You bet," agreed Ray emphatically. "Something that starts off with a lot of crazy yelps and yells and bangs and ends with Boulder Club, yelled just as loud as our mouths can holler it."

"We certainly must have a club yell," declared Constance. "That will be something for the Thinkout Committee to think out and bring with them to our next meeting."

"When will that be?" queried Ruth.

"Every day!" cried Ray. "It's going to be great fun and I think we ought to meet every

day, except Sundays."

"No, no," contended Gladys. "We girls have things to do and can't meet every day. I think every other afternoon, not counting Sundays, would be about right."

"Let's take a vote on it," suggested Will-

iamina.

"Good," agreed Constance. "We will vote on it. Write on a slip of paper how often you wish to meet and the time that gets the most votes wins."

Accordingly slips of paper were prepared and passed around; and, when the ballots

19

were counted, it was found that the everyother-days had won.

"Our next meeting, then, will be day after to-morrow at one o'clock, prompt, on the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs," declared Constance.

"And, if the Thinkout Committee hasn't thought out something good for us to do, we'll —we'll duck them in the pond," threatened Ethel.

"And scrub their heads with Sapolio, to brighten them up," warned Ruth.

"I think we have done enough thinking and sitting and talking for one day. My head is tired," complained Jennie. "I move that we adjourn and go wading in Silver Stream."

The motion was quickly seconded and promptly carried; and, in five minutes more, the twelve girls and boys, barefooted and barelegged, were wading and splashing joyously in the cool waters of Silver Stream.

#### CHAPTER II

#### PROMISED EXCITEMENT

Fortunately the air was cool and the skies were clear on the afternoon of the day of the next meeting of the Boulder Club; and, promptly at one o'clock, all had assembled on the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs; and the council-fire was kindled and the council-circle formed and the meeting called to order by the president. The roll was called and the minutes of the previous session were read with a rush, for all were anxious to get to the report of the Thinkout Committee as speedily as possible and learn what their thinkers had thought out for that afternoon's doing.

"Any other business to come before the club before we hear the report of the Thinkout Committee?" the president inquired, the moment the secretary finished reading the minutes and sat down.

"No! No! We want the report of the Thinkout Committee! We want to know what we are to do!" came from all parts of the council-circle, while Arthur shouted impatiently: "The club yell! Give us the club yell! We want to try it. What's the use of all this fussing?"

"Very well, then," declared the president; "we will now listen to the report of the Thinkout Committee," and her eyes and the eyes of the others turned to Mildred, chairwoman of the Thinkout Committee.

Vivacious Mildred jumped quickly to her feet, her dark eyes twinkling with excitement.

"We have made a beautiful yell," she decrared triumphantly; "and we have thought out the most delightful and interesting thing to do this afternoon. Now, we will give the yell," and, at a motion of her hand, Jennie and Ray, the two other members of the Thinkout Committee, jumped to their feet, threw back their heads, opened their mouths

wide, and, with all the vim and abandonment of joyous youth, yelled:

"Ki! Yi! Hi!
Biss! Boom! Bi!
Who—are—we?
Who—are—we?
Can't you see, O you dub?
We are the Boulder Club!
Boulder! Boulder!! BOULDER CLUB!!!"

"Mercy! It is a good thing we are miles from everybody, or they'd surely think a lunatic asylum was having a celebration. But, it is a great yell. I like it. Now, let us all try. If three can make a noise like that, we all ought to do dandy. How does it go?" and Constance, forgetting in her excitement the dignities of her office, sprang to her feet, followed by all the others.

"We have written it out on slips of paper, one for each of you," and Mildred thrust one hand into the bosom of her dress and drew out a small thin box. "They are in here. Take one and pass it along," and she handed

the box to Ruth, who stood next to her.

The strips of paper were quickly distributed and eagerly scanned and studied; and soon all

were ready to have a try at the yell.

"Now, then, everybody get ready to yell!" cried Constance, waving her slip of paper like the baton of a bandmaster. "Now, ready! One—two—three! Yell!" And, for the first time in the history of the world the full-voiced yell of the Boulder Club went echoing through the woods and vales and over the rocks of Boulderland.

"How was that? Didn't we do it dandy for the first time?" and Ethel turned her glowing face to Aunt Betty, who had not yelled but had listened.

"Great!" she answered. "I do not believe the boys in any college in the country could have done it better. Miss President," and she turned to Constance, "I move that the yell just given be the authorized legalized yell of the Boulder Club; and that hereafter it be given at the opening and the closing of each session."

"Second the motion," cried Arthur enthusi-

astically. "It's a splendid yell."

"Any remarks," and the president paused a moment. "If not, all those in favor of the motion make it manifest by rising and giving the yell of the Boulder Club. Now, ready—one—two—three—yell!"

All, including Aunt Betty this time, joined

in the yell.

"Fine! Carried unanimously," declared Constance, as the council-circle again squatted around the council-fire. "I think we have a yell that will make folks sit up and take notice—"

"Or stuff cotton in their ears," finished Ray,

grinning delightedly.

"Now, what is that 'most delightful and interesting thing' that we are to do this afternoon?" queried Williamina. "I am dying to hear what it is."

"It will be bully interesting," asserted Ray joyously. "But you girls mustn't get scart, even if there are ghosts in it!" he added mysteriously, winking one eye at Aunt Betty.

"Ghosts!" chorused the girls excitedly.

"O, do hurry and tell us what it is!" begged Williamina.

"Yes," and Constance, remembering that she was president, jumped to her feet. "We will now hear the further report of the Thinkout Committee."

All eyes again turned to Mildred, who arose to her feet.

"I think you will be pleased," she began, "with what we have——"

"O, cut out the fussings and tell us what it is!" broke in Arthur impatiently.

"With what we have thought out to do this afternoon," Mildred continued, glaring at Arthur. "We are to visit the General Knox Headquarters House; and Aunt Betty is to tell us all about the house; and show us the secret treasure-vault and the secret panels and the ghost-room and the witches' stairway and —and—O, there is a lot of interesting things to see and to hear about at the old house."

"Yes," smiled Aunt Betty. "Mrs. Rose-wood, the very kind lady who lives in the General Knox Headquarters House, has given the Boulder Club a most cordial invitation to visit her interesting home this afternoon. Mrs. Rosewood is a descendant of the Ellisons, who

owned and lived in the house during Revolutionary times."

"But, why is it called the General Knox

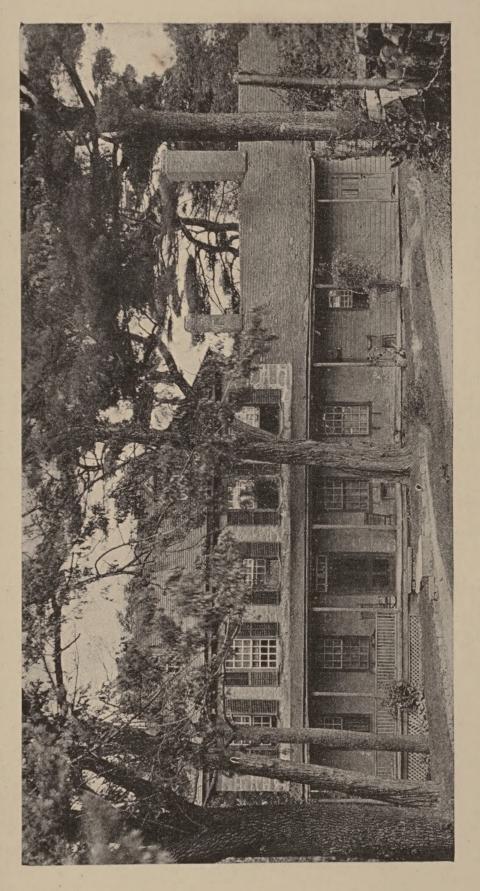
Headquarters House?" queried Ethel.

"Because General Knox, one of the famous generals of the Revolutionary War, made the house his headquarters for a little over a year during the war; and, while living here, he was often visited by General Washington and General Lafayette and other Revolutionary generals that you have read about in your histories."

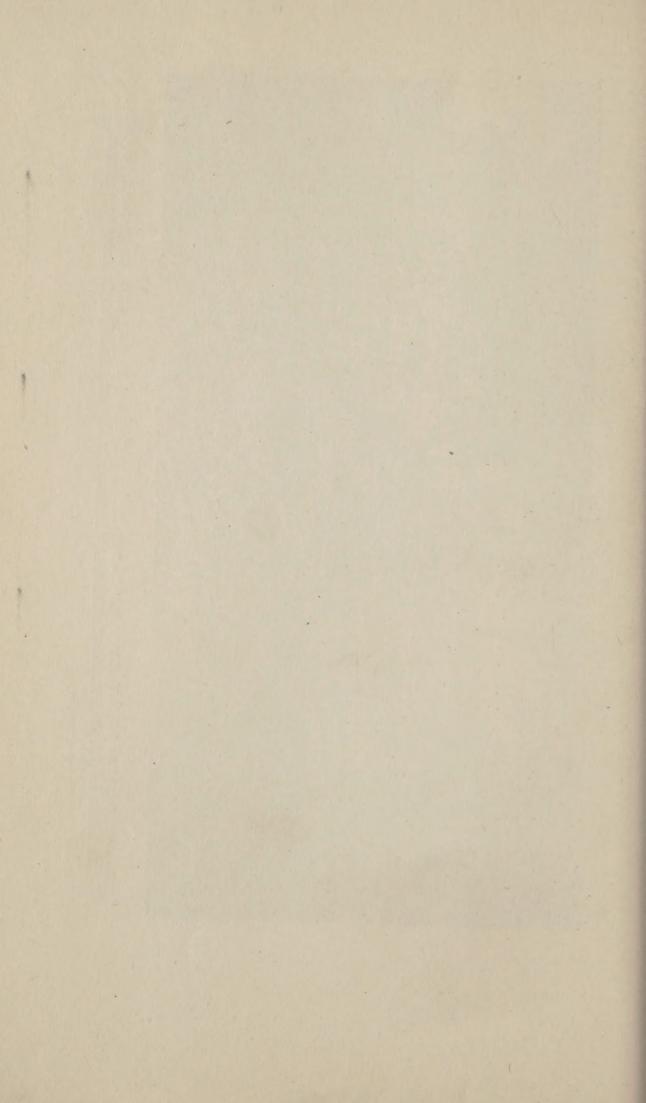
"But we won't have to study up any history about them ourselves, will we?" questioned Jennie, a bit doubtfully. "I never could get interested in history books."

"Of course not," volunteered Ray, a little scornfully. "Aunt Betty will just tell us all the interesting things and leave all the dull parts for the history books. That's what history books are for—dates and things that a fellow has to learn at school."

"No," and Aunt Betty smiled at Ray's interpretation of the value of history books, "we will not study the history from books; but



"THE HOUSE LOOKS TO-DAY JUST ABOUT AS IT DID WHEN GENERAL AND MRS. KNOX STEPPED OUT ON ITS LONG PORCH TO WELCOME GENERAL WASHINGTON, AS HE DISMOUNTED FROM HIS HORSE,"



from the old building itself. The house looks today just about as it did when General and Mrs. Knox stepped out on its long porch to welcome General Washington, as he dismounted from his horse; and I think we can make a very interesting afternoon of it. How do you like the idea?"

"Bully!" shouted the boys.

"Splendid!" cried the girls.

"And, if there are any ghosts in the old house, be sure and trot them out. I should like to see them," Arthur added a little boastfully.

"O!" exclaimed Williamina, horrified by his levity. "Don't talk that way about ghosts.

They might hear you."

"Nonsense," laughed Constance. "There isn't any such a thing as a ghost. If Arthur really thought there were ghosts. he would not be so brave.

"Pshaw!" and Arthur's face reddened a little. "Why should a fellow be afraid of ghosts, when he can punch his fist right through them and not even make a hole? There isn't anything solid to a ghost; and it

takes something solid to hurt a fellow. I don't believe in ghosts anyway."

"I thought not," laughed Constance. "But, maybe, when you have sat in the ghost-room, you will," she added mysteriously. "Now, if there is no further business to come before the house, a motion to adjourn to the General Knox Headquarters House is in order."

The motion was promptly made and seconded and carried.

"Now," and Constance jumped to her feet, "we must give the club yell before getting off the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs. Everybody—yell!"

All yelled at the very top of their voices, some of them even jumping up and down in their efforts to get a greater volume of sound out of their mouths.

"Say, have any of you girls a pin?" Ray asked, holding onto the front of his trousers, as they hurried off the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs. "I busted a button off my pants, when I made that last yell. But it was a great yell!"

Ethel quickly found the needed pin; and, when Ray had put the pin in the right place, all formed in line and the start for the General Knox Headquarters House was made.

## CHAPTER III

## A QUAINT OLD HOUSE

Down the banks of Silver Stream they marched, through the Field of the Great Stones, until they came to where Silver Stream widened into The Pond. Then they crossed a public road, that passed over the middle of the pond, dividing it almost in two, like a tight-drawn belt around the waist of a fat woman—and they stood before the narrow, arched, stone gateway that gave entrance to the grounds of the General Knox Headouarters House.

"Now," and Aunt Betty smiled, as the excited children passed, with many curious glances about them, under the rough stone arch of the gateway and on into the parklike grounds lying to the back of the house, "we are walking on ground where the feet of

Washington and Lafayette and Knox and many other heroes of the Revolution must have often walked; and, possibly, we are now under the very trees that looked down on them, as now they are looking down on us. I——"

"O, I see the house!" suddenly exclaimed one of the girls who had run on a short distance ahead of the others; and instantly there was a stampede of Aunt Betty's audience for the point of vantage.

"Hurry!" and Ethel glanced back toward Aunt Betty. "We want to get into that queerlooking house. You can tell us the rest some other time."

"Why, how queer! The front yard is back of the house! and the back of the house faces the road!" exclaimed Williamina, turning a questioning face to Aunt Betty, as she came hurrying up to where the children stood. "Were all houses built that way then?"

"No," laughed Aunt Betty. "But this particular house has its front yard, as you call it, back of the house. The public road has been changed since the house was built, so that now it runs back of the house; but you can still see

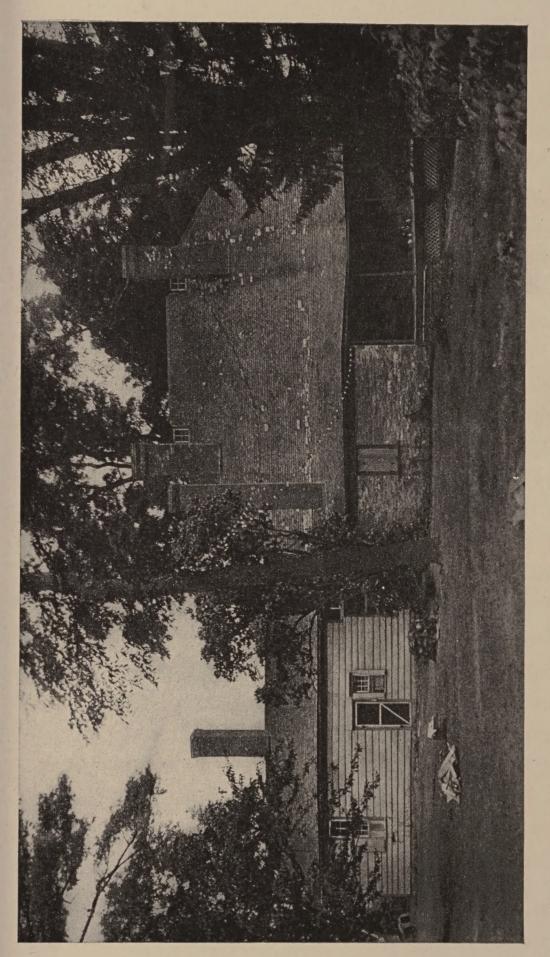
where the road once ran directly in front of the house."

"Why, what a lot of chimneys!" cried Jennie. They had now come to where they had an unobstructed view of the back of the house. "One—two—three—four, and one great big one—five! What in the world did they want so many chimneys for?"

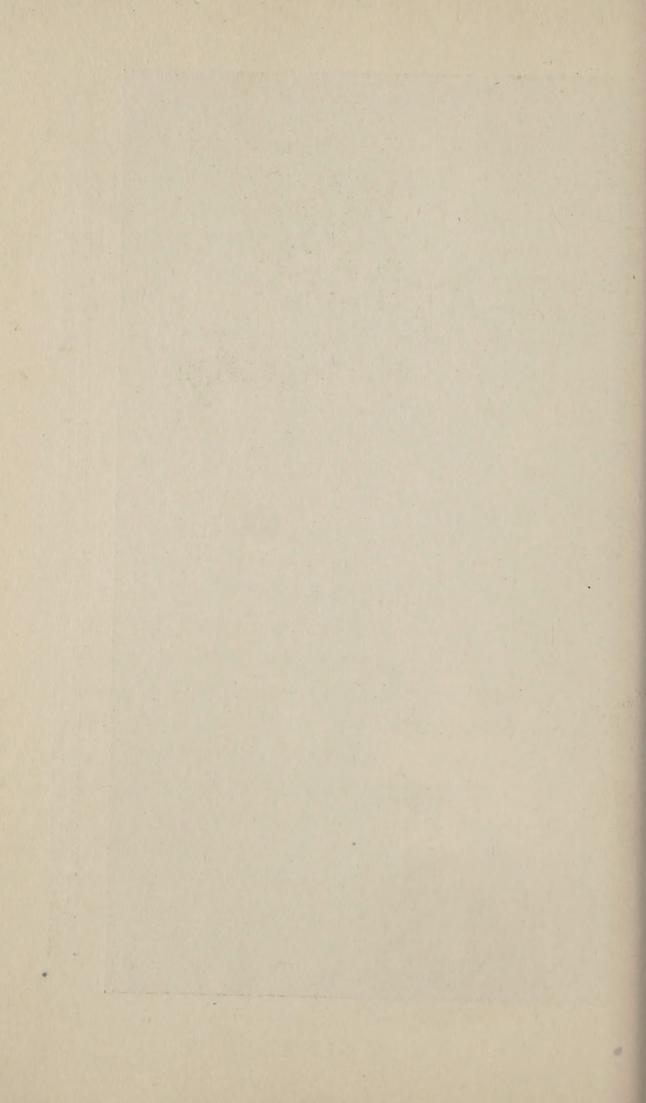
"The house was built before the days of stoves and furnaces," explained Aunt Betty, "when rooms were heated by open fireplaces, and every fireplace had to have a chimney into which to open directly. This made more chimneys necessary than are needed now, when a furnace, with one chimney, can heat a large house."

"Say, but wouldn't that roof make a dandy toboggan slide in the winter?" and Ray's eyes followed curiously the long slanting roof that ran from the high peak of the two-story stone part of the house down to within a few feet of the ground. "All that a fellow would need to do would be just to pour a little water on it and let it freeze."

By this time the Boulderites had reached



"SAY, BUT WOULDN'T THAT ROOF MAKE A DANDY TOBOGGAN-SLIDE IN THE WINTER?" AND RAY'S EYES FOL-LOWED CURIOUSLY THE LONG SLANTING ROOF THAT RAN FROM THE HIGH PEAK DOWN TO WITHIN A FEW FEET OF THE GROUND.



the end of the low one-storied frame part of the house. Here there was a gate; and, passing through it, they found themselves in front of the General Knox Headquarters House, a large two-storied stone building, with a dormer-windowed garret, a long low frame extension, and a long broad porch, running nearly the full length of the eighty feet of the front of the house.

Mrs. Rosewood, the kindly mistress of the old house, met them on the long low porch; and, in a few minutes, she had made each individual member of the Boulder Club feel that he or she was doing her a great honor in thus visiting her home.

"Isn't she lovely?" Ethel whispered to Constance; and, as her eyes rested on the sweet old face, where time and stress had left only the ennobling marks of faith and hope and love, she added awesomely: "Why, she herself looks as if she might be one of those dear old Revolutionary ladies, just stepped out of a history book."

"Yes," agreed Constance. "And what a fitting name for such a sweet, refined face.

Rosewood, sweet-scented, beautiful, fine-grained rosewood."

"Now, that we are all acquainted, let us go in," and Mrs. Rosewood, bowing and smiling, held open the door for the Boulderites to enter.

"Why, what a funny door!" and Williamina, who was in the lead, stared curiously at the door. "It is cut in two in the middle, so that it makes two doors."

"And it has a knocker, a real old-fashioned iron knocker!" cried Constance. "I have often read of these old knockers, but this is the first time I ever saw one on a door and in actual use. Can we try it?"

"Certainly," smiled Mrs. Rosewood.

Constance lifted the iron head of the knocker and let it fall against the door, with a clang that sounded throughout the house. Then each one of the Boulderites had to "ring the knocker," as Ray called it, but all agreed that the modern doorbell was better and handier, "because it can be made to ring anywhere in the house," as Jennie explained.

"But I can't see why they cut the door in

two?" queried the still puzzled Williamina.

"O, that was just to keep the little kids from tumbling out," Arthur volunteered, with the air of one who had made a special study of old doors.

"Huh! A lot you know about it!" scoffed Ray.

"I think it is time the lecture began," smiled Mrs. Rosewood.

"Sure," and Ray turned impatiently to Aunt Betty. "Now, why did they cut a good door like that in two in the middle?"

"That is what is called a Dutch door," answered Aunt Betty. "The style was brought over from Holland, and nobody seems to know exactly what purpose it served, at least I do not," she admitted frankly, unless, as Arthur suggested, it was to keep the little folks in and yet have the upper part of the door open for ventilation on hot days."

By this time all the Boulderites had crowded into the wide hall, which runs directly through the middle of the main building, and were glancing curiously and expectantly around.

"O, please show us the secret treasurevault first!" and Arthur, in his excitement, caught hold of Aunt Betty's arm. "I know everybody wants to see that first."

"Yes! yes!" echoed the others, catching some of Arthur's excitement. "Take us to the secret treasure-vault. We want to see that

first."

"All right," and Aunt Betty nodded and smiled to Mrs. Rosewood. "Let it be the secret treasure-vault next," and, followed by the wondering and curious children, she led the way through a large room, then through a small low room into a long narrow room and then into the treasure-vault room itself.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SECRET TREASURE-VAULT

"Well, here we are," declared Aunt Betty, stopping near the middle of the room, where she was quickly surrounded by the girls and boys. "Here we are in the secret treasure-vault room itself."

"But, where is the secret treasure-vault? I can see no secret treasure-vault!" exclaimed Arthur, looking around the room disappointedly.

"Huh! You didn't expect to find a secret treasure-vault, with a door-knob and a keyhole to it, did you?" laughed Ray. "Of course it is hidden."

"Yes, it is hidden," smiled Aunt Betty, "and—and I think there is still some treasure in it. Now, let us see who can find it first. Ready, everybody look."

"O-o-o, a secret-treasure hunt!" and in a

moment more the excited children were rushing about the room in every direction, examining the walls and the floor and even the ceiling; but all in vain. The secret treasure-vault remained unfound.

"O, dear me! I can never find it!" and Ruth looked up into the laughing face of Aunt Betty. "I'll give up. Now show me," and she eagerly caught hold of her arm.

"No! No!" exclaimed Constance. "We don't give up. Don't show us. We will find it yet. We must use more brains. We've just been using our hands and feet."

"Here! Here!" suddenly shouted Ray, excitedly pounding the wall near the chimney with his fist. "The wall sounds hollow here!"

Instantly all made a rush for Ray; and, in a moment, a dozen fists were pounding on the wall all around him, but without other results than aching knuckles.

"I don't believe it is in the wall at all," declared Constance disgustedly. "Come, Ethel, let's try the floor," and both girls, getting down on their hands and knees, began examining every crack in the boards carefully and pound-

ing on the floor with their fists and listening, as well as they could in that confusion of noises, for the suspicious hollow sound that might proclaim the finding of the hidden treasure-vault.

The others promptly followed their example, and soon the floor was covered with crawling boys and girls, all pounding the floor with their fists and listening anxiously, making such a funny sight that Mrs. Rosewood and Aunt Betty both laughed until the tears rolled down their cheeks.

Suddenly Arthur gave a yell and began tearing frantically at a loose board. All instantly made a rush for him, all except Jerry, who at that moment was on his hands and knees in the corner near the door, along with Constance, Ethel and Williamina. The three girls, at the yell from Arthur, jumped to their feet and made a rush for him, not hearing the sharp creak beneath their own feet as they did so. But, just as Jerry sprang to his feet a moment after them, one end of a square of the floor suddenly gave way beneath him, and, with a yell that sent shivers of horror shooting up and down every spinal column in the room, his body shot downward and disappeared in a black hole beneath the floor.

For a brief moment all of the children stood stock-still, staring at the black hole in the floor, too frightened to move. Aunt Betty and Mrs. Rosewood, with exclamations of fear, hurried to the hole; but, just as they reached it, the red head of Jerry bobbed up above the floor, his face a little pale from his sudden fright, but his eyes sparkling with triumph.

"Oi have found it!" he yelled. "Oi have found the treasure!" and he held up in both of his sturdy arms a round something, about the size and the shape of a large wooden pail.

In an instant the hole and Jerry were surrounded by eleven as excited children as there were in America at that moment.

"O-o-o, he has found a treasure-chest!" exclaimed Williamina. almost too excited to speak.

"Quick! Let's open it and see if there is any gold in it!" cried Arthur, reaching down eagerly for the round something in Jerry's arms. "It's ice-cream!" suddenly yelled Jennie, the first to really get her wits back. "Hurrah, it's a pail of ice-cream!"

And, sure enough, all now saw that the round something that Jerry was hugging so tightly in his arms was a small can of ice-cream tightly ice-packed in a wooden pail!

"Well," declared Ray, smiling up into the face of Mrs. Rosewood, "finding ice-cream is the next best thing to finding real treasure."

"Better," corrected Constance, "because we can eat the ice-cream and we couldn't eat the treasure. Besides the treasure wouldn't have belonged to us children anyway."

"Oi shure did find thot secret treasure-

vault," grinned Jerry triumphantly.

"That you did," laughed Aunt Betty, reaching down for the pail of ice-cream, "or, rather, the secret treasure-vault found you. But, aren't you hurt?"

"No, no, only a bit of bump on my head," and Jerry rubbed the back of his head with one of his fists, while he continued to grin triumphantly.

Mrs. Rosewood now procured a candle and handed it to Aunt Betty.

Aunt Betty lit the candle and, bending down, held the light so that it would illuminate the interior of the secret treasurevault.

"You see," she said, "it is large enough to conceal several men, and is supposed to have been made during Revolutionary times, to hide the valuables of the household or, possibly, a man or two, in case of a sudden raid by the British soldiers. The cover is made of carefully matched boards and fitted so nicely into the floor that even after all these years your sharp eyes were unable to find it, until the supports on one side, having rotted a little, gave way under the combined weight of you four children and tumbled Jerry down into it, much to his astonishment."

"Well, it is a sure-enough treasure-vault!" declared Ray, with a sigh of satisfaction, as he bent over the hole and looked down. I don't believe the British soldiers could have found it in a week, unless it played the same sort of a trick on them that it did on Jerry,"

he added, grinning. "But we found it any-

way."

"You certainly did, and now for the reward. The first dish of ice-cream goes to Jerry, because he found the secret vault. You owe this treat and the ingenious idea of hiding the cream in the treasure-vault and having you hunt for it, to the kindly thoughtfulness of Mrs. Rosewood," and Aunt Betty turned to that smiling lady.

"Bully for Mrs. Rosewood!" cried the irrepressible Ray. "She knows what kids like."

"I am sure, if you are all having as delightful a time as I am, then there is no 'owing' on either side," answered Mrs. Rosewood, smiling and bowing to the circle of young faces. "Your coming has been like a fresh breeze, blowing from the fragrant fields of youth. Now, if Constance and Ethel will kindly give me a little assistance, we will divide our treasure, as all good treasure-finders should."

In a very few minutes the treasure was divided equitably and all were busy stowing it away in their own secret treasure-vaults.

# CHAPTER V

### THE MYSTERY OF THE BURIED TREASURE

"DID you ever find any treasure hidden in the secret vault?" queried Arthur, pausing for a moment in his ice-cream eating and glancing toward Mrs. Rosewood.

"No," answered Mrs. Rosewood. "But," and her face saddened, "a great-great-grand-father of mine, who was an officer in Washington's Army and who was living here at the time of the Revolutionary War, is supposed to have hidden a large sum of money in gold and silver coin either in or near the house, just before he rode off to join his command. He was killed, shot dead on the field of battle, and the gold and the silver has never been found," and Mrs. Rosewood sighed.

"Have you looked for it?" cried Ray excitedly. "Yes, yes, every succeeding generation has searched the house from top to bottom and the grounds for a mile around the house, but not a dollar of the treasure has ever been found; and I fear it never will be," and a look of sad resignation, as if she were giving up a dearly cherished hope, for a moment clouded the serene face of Mrs. Rosewood.

"But didn't the officer, the one who hid the gold and the silver, tell any one where he hid it, or leave any paper, telling how to find it, like they always do in story books?" and Ray almost forgot his ice-cream in his interest.

"Yes," and Mrs. Rosewood smiled, at sight of the excited face of Ray. "In the bosom pocket of the dead officer was found a wallet, containing a torn piece of parchment, with words written on it purporting to describe the hiding-place of the treasure; but, so far, no one has been able to decipher it, although many of the shrewdest wits of the country have tried to do so."

"Can we—can we see it?" Ray's eyes were sparkling and his face was flushing with ex-

citement. "We—we might stumble on its meaning, you know."

For a moment Mrs. Rosewood did not answer, and her eyes saddened and seemed to be looking afar off. Then the look of resignation came back on her sweet face and she turned

to Ray with a smile on her lips.

"Yes," she said. "I will show you the parchment. Perhaps," and her kindly eyes lighted, "your younger and stronger eyes can see where our older and wiser eyes have been blind. Now, if you will excuse me for a few minutes, I will get the parchment," and she hurried from the room, leaving a dozen greatly excited children behind her.

"O, if we only could find that hidden treasure!" exclaimed Constance, the moment the door closed behind Mrs. Rosewood.

"We might," asserted Ray hopefully. "Anyway we can try, and, even if we do not find it, it will be the best kind of fun—a real treasure-hunt! But, isn't it bully of Mrs. Rosewood to treat us like this?" and he glanced around at the now nearly emptied dishes of ice-cream. I wish we could find

that hidden treasure, just for her sake. Sheshe looked as if it might mean a lot to her. Is—is her husband dead?" and Ray turned

inquiringly to Aunt Betty.

"Yes," she answered. "He has been dead for many years. All their children died young; and now Mrs. Rosewood is the last of her race. She told me, that, so far as she knew, she did not have a single blood relation alive anywhere in the world. The last of a goodly race, and one to whom our country owes much. She\_\_\_\_"

"Hush! Here she comes!" cried Ethel, who sat near the door, warningly.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TORN PARCHMENT

MRS. ROSEWOOD, when she re-entered the room, held in her hands a small, pearl-inlaid and richly carved casket, made of a dark and highly polished wood and looking as if it might be hundreds of years old. She carefully placed the casket down on the table, and then, taking a small key from a thin gold chain that hung around her neck, unlocked and opened it. An ancient fragrance, like the memories of long-withered flowers, faint, yet perceptible to all, came from the casket the moment the lid was lifted.

"This," and Mrs. Rosewood glanced at the circle of excited children, who had crowded close around the table, "was my great-great-grandmother's jewel casket, where she kept her jewels and her private letters and

papers. The jewels, alas! are all gone, but a few of her letters still remain; and here, with them, is where we have always kept the mysterious parchment found in the wallet of her dead husband, which, alas! she never saw, for the shock of the news of her husband's death, coming at a critical point in her own illness, was so great that she died within the hour. Ours has ever been a tragic history," and her old face saddened. "But," and the smile came back on her lips, "it is the parchment you wish to see and not to hear the doleful histories of long-dead men and women. Here it is!" and she carefully lifted out of the casket a piece of folded parchment, yellowed with age and soiled and ragged-edged from much handling. "If you and the children fail to read the riddle, my last hope of ever finding the treasure of my fathers is gone. I long ago gave up trying to solve the meaning of the puzzling words myself and all others have failed," and she handed the folded and yellowed bit of parchment to Aunt Betty.

Aunt Betty took the parchment, carefully unfolded it, and, spreading it out on the table

before her, stared down at it, while all the Boulderites crowded around, anxious to get a sight of the mysterious words that concealed within them a treasure of gold and silver.

This is what they saw, written in an old-fashioned script, but so plainly that all could read it with little difficulty:

#### WHERE I HID THE TREASURE

North — feet, east — feet, south — feet, east — feet — key — in — end of — of bridge, — flat rock.

49 — 99 — 45 6 feet und

The parchment, which had originally been a sheet some seven inches wide, had been rudely rent across one side, so that all of the lower inscription, except the figures and the word, "feet," and a part of another word had been lost.

"The same bullet that killed my great-great-

grandfather," explained Mrs. Rosewood, "passed through the wallet and tore through the parchment, leaving it as you see it, and, I fear, rendering its solution impossible; for, evidently, the figures and the words in the lower inscription contained the key that would unlock the meaning of the cryptic words above and tell where the treasure had been hidden."

"You must be right," agreed Aunt Betty after a few minutes' study of the parchment, "for certain necessary words and figures appear to have been purposely omitted from the upper inscription, without which it is utterly impossible to learn from it where the treasure was hidden. Yes, doubtless, the part of the parchment torn away by the fatal bullet contained the key; and, without it, its solution appears to be absolutely impossible," and she turned a disappointed face to Mrs. Rosewood.

"But," broke in Ray, unable longer to hold his excitement in check, "we mustn't give it up this easy. Why, we haven't studied the parchment five minutes yet. The whole secret may be right in those words before us, for all we know." "Well, I surely hope you can find it there, Ray," smiled Aunt Betty, "for I am compelled to agree with Mrs. Rosewood that the solution seems to be absolutely impossible without the missing words and figures."

"But the missing words and figures may be there," persisted Ray. "They might have been written with ink you can't see, until you

do something like-like-"

"Heating the paper!" broke in Constance excitedly. "Have you tried that?" and she turned a flushed face to Mrs. Rosewood.

"My dear girl, we have tried everything!" and Mrs. Rosewood threw up both her hands. "Everything that could be thought of that offered the remotest possibility of a solution has been tried during the hundred and more years we have been hunting for the treasure. I myself took the parchment to one of the best chemists in New York City, but he failed to find a word or figure or ink-mark of any kind, other than what you can see now on the parchment."

"Hi, see here!" cried Arthur excitedly. "In the last two lines it reads: 'Key in the end of -of bridge, flat rock.' That sounds as if it might mean something."

"Yes," smiled Mrs. Rosewood, "it really does sound as if it meant something, but, after a hundred and more years of turning over and digging under flat rocks and looking in the end of everything and anything that might be called a bridge, one is forced to believe that the phrase is meaningless, as it stands. I am afraid my ancestor's gold and silver will have to remain where he hid it," and she sighed softly.

"Well, we might stumble upon it or something," declared Ray, "while we are exploring around. But I guess you must be right about this paper," and he glared down at the parchment. "Nobody could find anything by such an inscription. Now let's continue the exploring. Possibly the ghost has the treasure,"

and he grinned.

"Yes, take us to the ghost-room and tell us about the ghost," urged Jennie. "Ghosts and hidden treasure ought to go together."

"Very well," acquiesced Aunt Betty, her face at once assuming a solemn expression.

"But I must caution you before entering the room that there must be no loud talking or unseemly levity while in the ghost-room."

"O-o-o!" and Williamina caught hold of one arm, while Ruth seized the other. "There

isn't a really and truly ghost, is there?"

"Pshaw! She is just trying to scare us," scoffed Arthur. "Come on. Who's afraid of ghosts? Ghosts don't appear in the daytime

anyhow."

"All right." There was no smile on Aunt Betty's face, as she spoke. "I did my full duty when I cautioned you. Ghosts are even more sensitive than human beings about having fun made of them, so I thought I ought to caution you. Now, we will go to the ghostroom," and she led the way back to the hall in the stone building, stopping on the way to show the children the date, 1734, on the iron fire-back in one of the smaller fireplaces, which was, probably, the date of the building of the house.

# CHAPTER VII

#### THE GHOST-ROOM

THE hall in the main building is divided in the middle by a thick stone partition, with a door passing through it. Aunt Betty at once led her little party through this door into the other part of the hall; and stopped in front of the first door that she came to on her left.

"This is the ghost-room," she said, pointing to the closed door, which bore the following legend, inscribed in heavy black letters, surrounded by a black border, on a square of white cardboard, tacked to one of the upper panels of the door:

# **GHOST-ROOM**

This is the room haunted by the uneasy spirit of the unfortunate Kitty Wyndt, who vanished so mysteriously from this life during the stormy days of the Revolution. The room was her bedroom and the last time she was seen in the flesh was when, with lighted candle in her hand, she bade her friends good night and, entering this room, closed the door behind her and disappeared forever from human ken.

Slowly and solemnly Aunt Betty read aloud these words, and then placed her hand on the door-knob.

"Now we will enter the ghost-room," she said, and swung the door open and stepped within, followed closely, so closely that she had barely space in which to move, by all the Boulderites, who for once were so quiet that one could almost hear their hearts beating.

One curtained window in the end of the

room opposite the door gave a dim chill light, and showed a fireplace and mantel, flanked by closet doors, on one side of the room and a bare white wall on the other. There was no furniture in the room, not even a chair, but a dull-covered carpet covered the floor.

For a moment the children stared around the room in silence, even the glib tongues of Ray and Arthur were still, and all drew close to Aunt Betty. There was something in the feel of the room, in the dull light that came through the one curtained window, in a, perhaps fancied, chill dampness that seemed to hang in the air, that awed their young hearts; and yet they were not exactly frightened, only each had just a "shivery and creepy-crawly feeling," as Williamina expressed it.

"Now tell us the story of the ghost," whispered Constance. "It feels d-d-delightfully ghostly and mysterious here, just right for a

ghost story."

"Yes, as soon as we are all comfortably seated, I will tell you why and how this room came to be called the ghost-room," replied Aunt Betty, dropping down Turk-fashion on

the floor, where she was instantly surrounded by all the children, the youngest sitting as close to her as they could, while Arthur almost sat down on her feet, so that he could hear the story better, he said.

"Is it true?" inquired Williamina, snuggling up close to one arm of Aunt Betty, like a frightened chick under the mother-wing.

"That you can tell better after you have heard the tale. Now, are all comfortable and

ready for the story?"

"Yes, yes, only don't make it too scary," whispered Jennie, getting firm hold of Aunt Betty's other arm.

## CHAPTER VIII

# THE PITIFUL TALE OF SWEET LITTLE KITTY WYNDT

"FIRST you must understand," began Aunt Betty, "that considerably over a hundred years have passed since that sad and unfortunate night, when the door of this room closed so mysteriously and for the last time on the sweet face of little Kitty Wyndt, and that all of those who were then present and knew personally of this strange happening have been quiet in their graves for over a century, so that what you hear is but the legend handed down from the lips that once lived to the lips that now live, and cannot be credited with the accuracy of recorded history. But, even as the tale has been told to me, I will tell it to you, and, at its ending, you can form your own conclusions as to its truthfulness.

"Kitty Wyndt was eighteen, fair and slender and graceful as the lilies that grew in her own garden, when she came to visit her good friends, the Ellisons, who built this old house and who lived in it during the troublesome days of the Revolution. Rumor said that she had a lover, an officer in the British army, and therefore unpleasing to her parents, who were loyal to their home and country at the price of loyalty to their king; and that it was to free her from this same lover that her good father and mother had sent her to visit the home of the Ellisons, then within the lines of the American army, which had gone into camp near Snake Hill, which was only a few miles away.

"Now, whether rumor spoke true or not, I do not know; but for twelve days after Kitty came to the Ellisons there seemed no heart in her living. She wandered about the house and through the surrounding grounds, like one out of whom all hope of joy had gone; and very sad and tender and pensive was the look in her sweet blue eyes; and the bloom of the rose went from her cheeks and the flesh wasted

from her bones. She faded like a flower thirsting in vain for water. Then, on the morning of the thirteenth day, she went for a walk down The Glen, with Cæsar, a huge wolfhound, for her only companion. At noon she came back, with a flush in her cheeks, a sparkle in her eyes and a quick liveliness in her movements that caused all to marvel and to rejoice; for, thought the good folks, the homesickness is leaving her, she will soon be contented and happy again. All that afternoon she was oddly uneasy, as the women folks recalled afterward, starting suddenly into song, then as suddenly becoming quiet and pensive, not stopping long in one spot, but ever moving quickly about the house from one place to another, her cheeks sometimes flushing redly, then swiftly paling, until good mother Ellison thought that she must be coming down with a fever, and declared that she would brew her a strong herb tea, which would drive the fever from her blood. Whereat Mistress Kitty, laughing merrily, kissed her, and then burst into tears, much to the good woman's astonishment. But, while

her eyes were yet wet with the tears, she ran

away laughing.

"That night she was wildly merry in the house, until it became bedtime, when she became pensive; and, when she took her candle in her hand to go to her room, there was a frightened look in her face and eyes, as if she were about to do something at thought of which her heart trembled. Whereat mother Ellison laughingly said she would come and sleep with her, if the thunder and the lightning affrighted her over much, for a thunder storm had come up suddenly and the thunder was now making a most awesome noise. But Kitty, again laughing, bade her guard her own fears, vowing that she was not afraid of the thunders of the good God; and, still laughing, yet still with the frightened look in her face and eyes, she kissed her and bade her good night at the bedroom door; and, with the lighted candle in her hand, entered the room and closed the door behind her.

"That moment in the candle light, as she passed through the doorway into the bedroom, was the last moment that living eyes saw the Wyndt, in the flesh; for, when the door closed behind her that night, it had closed on her forever.

"The next morning, when mother Ellison called her, there was no answer. When she knocked on the door, at first softly, then loudly, there came no reply. Then the good woman, becoming frightened, threw open the door, it was unlocked, and entered the room. Not a sign of sweet Kitty Wyndt was anywhere. On a chair lay one of her handkerchiefs, a dainty bit of snowy white lace and linen. It was still damp with her tears andcold. Her heavy hooded cloak was gone from the closet; but all her other belongings, save the clothing she had on the night before, were still in their accustomed places. But little Kitty Wyndt had vanished utterly, without leaving a sign behind her of how or whither or why she had gone; and never again was she seen by relative or friend or acquaintance; and, even to this day, the mystery of her disappearance is as great a mystery as it was that morning, when house and grounds and the surrounding country were searched in vain for signs that might give some clue whither or how she had vanished.

"Now, that is the story of the disappearance of little Kitty Wyndt; and the wonder and the mystery of it. But, whether she fled in safety to her British lover and lived long years of happiness with him; or, whether, in trying to flee with him, she met with some heart-rending disaster, can never be known of a certainty—only, if her going brought her happiness, then why cannot her spirit rest in peace and why should it come back in its uneasy wanderings to this room?"

"And—and does it, does little Kitty Wyndt really come back to this room, to this very room where we are now?" and Jennie clutched yet more tightly the arm she was gripping and glanced fearfully around the room.

"Go on—O, do go on!" urged Ray. "What happened next? Don't keep us waiting. Tell us about the ghost."

## CHAPTER IX

#### THE GHOST

"For just a year after the strange disappearance of Kitty Wyndt nothing extraordinary happened," continued Aunt Betty, her voice lowering unconsciously; "and her sad and tragic going had become only a memory that was seldom recalled. Then, one night a guest, a stranger to the house and its history, was given this room in which to sleep; and, as he went into the room, a lighted candle in his hand, a great storm was raging without, with awesome noise of thunder and vivid flashes of lightning, even such a storm as had been raging on the night one year before, when Kitty Wyndt, with the fear of something in her eyes, had stepped into the room and closed the door behind her.

"The guest had a letter to write; and, with

his mind busy forming his thoughts into words, he took paper and pen and ink from his portmanteau, drew up a chair to a small table, and, seating himself, began the writing of the letter. For a time nothing was heard in the room but the busy scratching of his quill pen and the sounds of the storm raging without, while the letter writing went on apace.

"He had finished the letter and had folded and directed it and was about to lift the wax with which to seal it to the flame of the candle, when a sudden chill wind swept through the room, causing the candle flame to flare greatly and the guest to turn his head quickly, thinking that the wind had blown open the door. Judge his amazement and dread when he saw, standing near the fireplace, the slender form of a young maiden, a lighted candle in one of her hands, and a heavy cloak flung over her shoulders, with its hood thrown back, showing a sweetly beautiful face, out of whose blue eyes looked a great fear.

"For, he knew not how many minutes, the guest sat staring at this weird apparition, the wax held suspended near the flame of the candle in his horror-stiffened hand and the blood running chilly through his veins; for there was that in the look of the sweet young face, in the blue eyes and in the chill that hung in the air, that told him he was looking on no mortal form of flesh and blood. He tried to speak, but could not. He tried to rise from his chair and run from the room, but his muscles were leaden and motionless, yet his eyes saw distinctly and his brain worked clearly.

"For a time the apparition stood motionless, staring straight down into the fireplace, then the slender form stooped and the hand that held the candle placed it on the hearth and both hands began a frantic search among the smoke-blackened stones of the fire-bed. At last, with a heavy prolonged sigh, that seemed to have been drawn from the inmost depths of her heart, the figure slowly straightened up, and now, for the first time, the eyes looked straight into the eyes of the guest, who still sat frozen in his chair, with the wax still held suspended in his stiffened hand near the flame of the candle. As those two, steadfastly star-

ing, blue eyes looked into his eyes, the lips began to move and the muscles of the throat to contort, as if the vocal cords were struggling to utter spoken words, and one white hand was lifted and the finger pointed toward the fireplace, but no words came from between those struggling lips. For a space the two stood thus, staring into each other's eyes, then, suddenly, the pointing hand dropped despairingly—

"And, to his unutterable horror and astonishment, the guest sat staring at the empty

fireplace-

"The moment he could move, he jumped up from his chair, and, white-faced and trembling, hurried from the room. Not wishing to arouse the house, he slept for the remainder of the night on a broad lounge in the parlor.

"In the morning, after he had related his weird experience, he heard, for the first time, the story of the strange disappearance of little Kitty Wyndt, and was shown a picture of her, made a short time before the night she vanished.

"'The very girl I saw in my room last night!' the guest declared, the moment his eyes rested on the picture, his face whitening.

"Then it was also remembered that that night was the first anniversary of the night

of her disappearance."

"Has the—has the ghost been seen since?"

queried Ray in an awed whisper.

"Yes, three times, so it is said," answered Aunt Betty, "and each time on the anniversary night of Kitty Wyndt's disappearance, but only when a violent storm was raging outside the house—a combination that does not often happen. It would seem that she can come back only, as she went, in the midst of the violence of a storm and on the anniversary of her disappearance."

"And—and has she been back recently?" asked Constance, her face showing that she hardly knew whether or not to believe the

story.

"No," Aunt Betty replied, not even smiling.
"For nearly a hundred years the anniversary
night of Kitty Wyndt's disappearance has
chanced to be pleasant, so that there is no

one now living who has actually seen the ghost."

"But, how could she get out of this room, without leaving some signs of her going? That's what I should like to know," and Arthur's eyes sparkled with excitement. "You know lots of these old houses have secret passages in them; and I'll bet there is one going from this room to somewhere outside, and that that is the way Kitty went out to meet her British lover; and that this is where the treasure is hidden, and—"

"Stop! Stop!" and Aunt Betty raised her hand in simulated indignation. "You are stealing all my thunder; for there really is said to be a secret tunnel, running from the house down to Murderer's Creek or to The Glen. At least that is the legend that has come down to this day; and some think that Kitty Wyndt and her lover somehow discovered this tunnel; and that, while she was escaping through it with him, a part of the tunnel caved in and buried both alive; and that that is why her spirit haunts this room, to try to make this terrible disaster known to the living,

Christian burial. The fact that her British lover disappeared at the same time, never to be seen or heard of again, seems to give strength to this theory. But, on the other hand, although many have searched for this secret tunnel, no one has yet been able to find it. So, there you are," and she shook her head doubtfully, as if the solving of the mysterious problem were altogether too much for her.

"Well, I for one believe in the secret tunnel," declared Arthur emphatically; "and that it starts from this room; and, if we look, we might find it. Come, let's try," and he

jumped to his feet.

"O, if we only could!" exclaimed Constance, springing to her feet. "And if we should find the dead bodies of the two lovers—"

"You give me the shivers. But, let us look

anyway."

By this time Arthur, followed by all the excited children, stood in front of the old fireplace, now closed by a fireboard.

"I'll bet the opening to the secret tunnel is

there somewhere," he said, pointing to the fireplace, "because that's where the ghost pointed. Can we take the fireboard out, so that we can look?"

"Certainly," answered Mrs. Rosewood, who, after returning the ancient casket to its proper place, had joined them in the ghost-room. "It lifts out quite easily."

In a moment more the eager hands of the boys had the fireboard out, and the old smoke-begrimed fireplace was before them, looking just as it must have appeared on the night that little Kitty Wyndt disappeared so mysteriously from this very room.

Instantly Ray and Arthur were down on their knees, their heads in the fireplace and their hands excitedly pressing and pounding and pulling at the smoke-blackened stones of the fire-bed.

Suddenly Arthur uttered a yell that made every one in the room jump; and, springing to his feet, he had his hand on the door-knob, even before the frightened girls could reach it. Here he got his wits back sufficiently to give a horrified glance toward the old fireplace—only to see Ray grinning ecstatically at him and Aunt Betty struggling desperately to keep from laughing.

"It was only a large patch of falling soot," laughed Aunt Betty, getting control of her voice by a powerful effort, "as your blackened cheek and neck show."

"Crickety! But I thought it was the ghost feeling for my throat, sure! It felt so cold—and—and clammylike," and Arthur shivered. Then his face flushed with shame, as he realized what an amusing figure he must have cut, while fleeing so wildly from the clutch of a black patch of soot.

"I don't wonder it frightened you, coming so sudden and unexpected," Aunt Betty soothed. "I am sure it would have frightened me. Now I think you had better let Mrs. Rosewood show you where you can wash. One side of your face and neck is nearly black."

"Yes, yes," and Mrs. Rosewood hurried to Arthur, who began to look as if he were on the verge of crying. "Come right along with me. A little soap and water will soon make your face all right again," and, throwing one arm around his shoulders, she hastened away with him.

For some five minutes longer Ray and the others pounded and poked in and about the fireplace. Then they gave up the search in disgust; and Aunt Betty led them out into the hall to await the return of Mrs. Rosewood and Arthur.

"But we can try again sometime, can't we?" Ray urged. "You know the entrance to the secret tunnel might be from some other part of the house. Besides, we might stumble on the hidden treasure, while we are looking. Say, but this is a great old house, isn't it?"

"Indeed and it is," smiled Aunt Betty. "One of the most interesting of the old Revolutionary houses left in the country; and, of course, we will have another hunt for the secret tunnel and the hidden treasure. Perhaps, some day, we will go down The Glen and along the bank of Murderer's Creek and have a hunt for the other end of the tunnel there. I think, if there is such a thing as a secret tunnel running from the house to Mur-

derer's Creek or The Glen, our chances of finding it would be better there than in the house, which has been often searched from garret to cellar."

# CHAPTER X

#### THE ROOM OF THE SECRET PANELS

WHEN Mrs. Rosewood and Arthur reappeared a few minutes later, all marks of the soot had been removed from the boy's face; but his cheeks were still red and it was a long time before he ventured to raise his eyes to the grinning faces of Ray and Constance and never again was he heard to express a desire to meet a ghost or to boast of how bravely he would act, should one appear.

All eyes now turned expectantly to Aunt Betty, who at once stepped to the door directly across the hall from the door of the ghost-

room.

"This," she said, as she placed her hand on the door-knob, "is the Room of the Secret Panels, which concealed small closets built in the chimney above the fireplace," and she pushed the door open and entered, followed by the children, who made a rush for the fireplace.

"Well, I don't see anything very secret about them," Ray declared a bit indignantly, the moment his eyes rested on the hinged and key-holed doors of a couple of small closets built in the recesses of the chimney just above the mantel-shelf of the fireplace. "Anybody with half an eye could see that those were doors, with their keyholes and hinges."

"Yes," admitted Aunt Betty. "But, supposing there were no keyholes or hinges to be seen, how then could you tell that they were doors? You will notice that the door-panels are exactly like the other panels; and no one would suspect that there were any doors there, if it were not for the hinges and keyholes showing. Well, those panel-doors are supposed once to have been held in place by strong springs, so arranged that by pressing on a certain spot, the springs would be released and the door could then be slid to one side sufficiently to allow entrance to the closet.

The hinges and the keyholes are the innovations of a later day."

This explanation satisfied all; and now each one of the boys and the girls had to stand on a chair, and thrust his or her hand into the closets, and feel around inside, and swing the doors shut, in the meantime, doubtless, picturing, in fancy, the jewels and other precious things that must have been hidden in these recesses in the long ago.

"Well, it surely is an interesting old house," declared Ethel with satisfaction, as she jumped down from the chair. "It almost makes me wish that I might have lived in those old days, when there were such things as secret treasure-vaults and secret panels and secret tunnels and buried treasure and other romantic things that we can now only read about in books."

"Yes, they are all right to talk about and dream about," admitted practical Ray; "but I don't think I'd care to have lived in those days. The house doesn't look to me anywhere near as comfortable to live in as our New York flat; and I'd rather use gold and silver to buy

things with, than to be obliged to secretly bury it in order to keep it from being stolen. But, of course," he made haste to add, a bit apologetically, "it's great fun now for us kids to hunt for secret treasure-vaults and secret tunnels and secret panels and such things; and it will be great, if we can only find that treasure hidden by Mrs. Rosewood's Revolutionary ancestor; and—and—" Ray began to flounder. "Well," he ended desperately, "I am glad I am living now and not then. Now show us something else," and he turned to Aunt Betty.

"Let's have a look at the witches' stairway. You haven't showed us that yet," begged

Williamina.

"All right," responded Aunt Betty, and led the way upstairs.

The witches' stairway ran from the second

floor to the garret.

When Aunt Betty reached the door that opened on this stairway, she stopped and, lighting the candle which Mrs. Rosewood had handed her, placed her hand on the doorknob.

"In Germany," she said, "the kind of a

stairway that I am about to show you is called the witches' stairway, possibly because it is almost as straight as a ladder and yet is so made that one can walk up it without the help of the hands quite easily, after one has learned how," she added, smiling. "Now, who wishes to be the first to try the witches' stairway?" and she threw open the door and held up the candle, so that its light illuminated the narrow boxlike opening up which ran the curious stairs.

All crowded forward, eager to get a sight of the stairs; but no one volunteered to be the first to mount to the dark garret.

"Suppose you go first and show us how," suggested Ray; "and then we will follow."

"All right," agreed Aunt Betty. "Now notice the odd way the steps are made, wide at one end and coming to a point at the other. Indeed, each step is really a right-angled triangle of board, so placed on opposite sides of the stairway that the point of the acute angle reaches only to the middle of the stairway, with the long side of the triangle out. This enables one to go up the stairs easily, how-

ever steep they are, by swinging the feet upward through the opening thus left in the middle of the stairway. Like this," and she proceeded to illustrate the proper method of climbing these peculiar stairs; and soon stood in the garret above.

The children followed. All mounted to the top in safety; but not without many shrill screams and much loud laughter.

"Now, what next?" queried Mildred, when the curious old garret had been fully explored.

"We will now go down to the parlor," and Aunt Betty led the way down the witches' stairway to the parlor below.

"Be seated," she said, when the parlor was reached, motioning toward the chairs and the sofa that encircled the room.

The girls and boys quickly complied; and, when all their active little bodies had found seats, they turned their eager faces expectantly toward Aunt Betty.

"We are ready," suggested the impatient Jennie, the moment she saw Aunt Betty did not begin to talk at once.

## CHAPTER XI

#### THE MAGIC POKER

For a minute longer Aunt Betty stood near the old fireplace, with head bowed and without speaking a word, a dreamy look on her face, as if her thoughts were far away from

the present, then she raised her head.

"Now," she said, and, bending down, she picked up an old iron poker that stood leaning against one side of the fireplace of the quaint old room, "let us imagine this ancient iron rod, that, perchance, was used to poke the coals of this fireplace on the very night that Lucy Knox, the beautiful wife of General Knox, gave her great ball in honor of Washington and his generals, and which, consequently, must know what then took place, is endowed with the magical qualities of dispelling the present and revivifying the past, when

swung slowly around the head three times; and that, through its magic, we can sit here, seeing but unseen, and witness the doings of the brave men and fair women, who gathered in this room on that long-gone-by night of the great ball, when the stately General Knox and his beautiful wife did the honors of host and hostess to our revered Washington and his generals.

"See, I lift the poker above my head and swing it slowly around—once—twice—three times; and, behold! the present vanishes and the past becomes as the present; and we sit in the parlor of the Ellison House on the night of the great ball; and we see the gallant officers and the beautiful ladies of that long ago moving before us; and we hear their laughter and their talk, as they come and go from the room.

"There, right there, a little in front of the glowing fireplace, stands Washington. We instantly recognize that tall form and ruggedly molded face. At his right hand stands General Knox, not as tall as Washington, but greater in bulk of body; and the stately lady,

with the vivacious eyes and smiling lips, that we see standing by the side of General Knox, is his beautiful wife, Lucy. At the left of Washington are grouped a number of his officers, with General Greene occupying the post of honor next to Washington. As we look we see the guests passing slowly in front of this little group, each pausing to clasp the hand of Washington and to greet the host and hostess and the officers.

"See with what gracious dignity Washington receives all; and how willingly all pay him the homage of their confidence and admiration. How gallantly the men appear, dressed in all the glories of their regimentals, their light swords swinging by their sides! How courtly they bow to the ladies, as they greet them! And the ladies, how beautiful they look in the bright candle light, their natural charms rendered yet more fascinating by the bewitching costumes they wear! And how charmingly they receive the homage of the men, as they glide from place to place in the room, fragrant and beautiful as freshly plucked flowers!

"But, now the reception of the honored guests has come to an end; and we see Washington and his officers and General Knox and the fair Lucy mingling with their guests; and the talk grows more lively and the laughter merrier and more frequent; and, presently, there comes to our ears the soft strains of music; and we hear the cry: 'Clear the rooms for the dance!' and we see the men bowing before the ladies and beseeching the honor of the first dance with them.

"How quickly the many swift hands push the chairs and the tables away from the centers of the rooms! In a brief five minutes all is ready for the dance to begin; and then all pause and we see all eyes turn to Washington and the many beautiful women who chance but, is it chance?—to be standing near him.

"Look, how flushes of red come and go in their cheeks, as they wait, some with eyes downcast modestly, and others, more bold, even venturing a challenging glance toward the face of Washington himself; for dear to the heart of each of these fair ones would be the honor of opening the ball with Wash-

ington.

"Slowly Washington glances around the room, then we see his eyes light up, as, with a smile, he walks across the open space that had been formed in the center of the room to where pretty little Maria Colden stands blushing near the door. Now the couples form in line, with Washington and Maria Colden at the head, the doors are thrown open, and the grand promenade through the rooms of the house, with which the ball opens, begins. As Washington and Maria Colden pass through the door of the room, we see the General bend his head toward his beautiful partner, now more beautiful than ever with her flushing cheeks and sparkling eyes, and say something to her, but so low is his voice that we cannot catch his words, although we judge them to be something complimentary, because of the deeper flush that glows on the fair cheeks. Soon the promenade is over and the dance music is sounding. The parlor, where we sit, is not large and only a few couples can dance in it at a time; but, out in the wide hall and

coming from the other rooms, we can hear the light patter of the dancing feet and catch glimpses of the moving forms.

"Now the night grows late, for time passes swiftly in our magical vision; and we see that the lively feet are becoming weary. In the room where we sit only three couples are now dancing, the beautiful Maria Colden and a tall French officer, the daintily sweet Gitty Wynkoop and an American colonel, and the golden-haired little Sally Jansen and a tall captain of General Knox's artillery. Around the walls of the room sit many watching them; for these three girls are the belles of the evening and radiant with youth and beauty and happiness. But, presently the music ceases.

"The dance is over.

"'Let us go to the window. I am hot with the dancing,' says sweet Gitty Wynkoop.

"'Good,' declares Maria Colden, blushing and laughing. 'A lover's moon shines in the sky. Let us sit by the window and watch it.'

"Now the three couples make their way laughingly to the deep west window; and we see them sitting there, the moonlight and the candle light shining on their faces; and hear their low voices as they discourse of the pleasures of the ball and utter the many sweet trifles that come to the lips, when the heart is young and love is near.

"'Of a surety this has been a most delightsome night,' we hear Maria Colden say, 'A
most delightsome and glorious night for me.
Never did I dream of so great an honor being
done poor me. O,' and her flushing face and
sparkling eyes tell how deeply she is affected,
'but isn't Washington a wondrous man? I
do not wonder there be some that think him
almost more than mortal. Truly I could not
have felt more awed had I been treading the
measure with an archangel!'

"'And truly I would not care to dance with an archangel, howsoever great the honor might be,' laughs lively Gitty Wynkoop, with what we fancy a little touch of envy in her voice. 'I would even prefer the colonel here,' and she glances archly at her escort.

"The night, indeed, has been one of great pleasure, of very great pleasure,' and the eyes of the French officer glow warmly as they rest on the sweet face of his companion. 'Already has its memory been written deep in my heart,' and he bows low to the fair Maria. 'But I would leave some souvenir of this delightful hour here, something that will tell to aftertimes that this room was graced by the presence of these three most beautiful and winsome maidens. Ladies, allow me,' and we see the courtly Frenchman arise to his feet and, bowing to each girl in turn, slip a diamond ring from his finger and step to the window near which they were sitting. 'Allow me to inscribe here, on this pane of glass, the names that this night has already cut deep in our hearts,' and, pressing the sharp edge of the diamond to the glass, he slowly scratches the names of the three girls, Maria Colden, Gitty Wynkoop, and Sally Jansen, one beneath the other, sprawlingly on the small pane of glass, while the girls joke him merrily over the awkwardness of his writing, their eyes in the meantime secretly admiring the diamond. And, even as he finishes the writing, Washington enters the room, and our eyes turn quickly to him, as do the eyes of every one in the room;

and we see him bowing his adieus to the ladies and saying good night to the men. A moment later we hear a servant announce that the horse of the General is at the door; and, with a final bow, Washington passes out of the room and out through the hall into the darkness of the night."

BANG!

With a clatter that made every one in the room jump, the heavy iron poker dropped from Aunt Betty's hand to the floor; and, with the falling of the poker, the vision vanished.

"O dear! Why did you drop that poker?" sighed Williamina. "I could almost see dear Maria Colden and sweet Gitty Wynkoop and pretty Sally Jansen making their courtesies to Washington and turning to say something to their lovers, when that horrid bang came. Why didn't you wait until I heard what it was that they said? I am sure it was something nice."

"But, did that French officer really write those names with his diamond ring on a pane of glass in a window of this room?" broke in Ray excitedly. "If he did, they might be there now. Come, let us look," and he made a rush for the west window, followed by all the others; and soon a dozen pairs of sharp eyes were carefully scanning every one of the twenty-four window panes in their quaint old frames.

"Crickety! Bully! Here they are!" suddenly yelled Ray. "Just as—as we saw the Frenchman write them, standing in the moonlight and the candle light. Say," and he turned a pair of astonished eyes to Aunt Betty, "just swing that old poker around your head again and show us some more."

"No, that fall broke its magic spell forever," laughed Aunt Betty. "But, as you see, the names are there themselves to vouch for the truthfulness of the vision." \*

Each one of the children now had to examine the names on the pane of glass; and,

<sup>\*</sup>In 1848, Benson John Lossing, the historian, visited this old house and secured facsimiles of the three names, that still could be plainly read, as plainly as when cut in the pane of glass with the diamond ring of the French officer. The curious will find the facsimiles reprinted in his Pictorial Field-Book of the Revolution. Now, however, the pane of glass containing the three names has been removed; and, consequently, those who visit the old house cannot see this curious and interesting souvenir of the night of Lucy Knox's great ball.—Author.

when this had been done to the evident wonder and satisfaction of all, they again turned expectant eyes to Aunt Betty, ready for the next venture.

"Now," and Aunt Betty smiled at the looks of eager expectancy on their faces, "I think there is nothing left for us to explore but the cellar, so we will go down there. I want to show you how solidly the foundation of the great chimney is laid," and she led the way down into the old cellar.

# CHAPTER XII

#### SIGNS OF TROUBLE

"WHY!" exclaimed Jennie, the moment they were in the cellar and her eyes had measured the bigness of the great chimney's foundation, "that is almost large enough to have a little house inside of it!"

"Gee!" cried Ray, catching hold of Aunt Betty's sleeve in his excitement. "Maybe that is where the treasure is hidden. I am sure it is plenty large enough. I wish we could knock a hole in it, just to see," and his eyes rested longingly on the huge shaft of stone that disappeared mysteriously through the floor above their heads.

"No, no," laughed the Storyteller. "We will not begin our thanks to Mrs. Rosewood by knocking holes in her house. I am sure the Boulder Club can find a better way than that

of showing its appreciation of her kindness in thus having thrown open her home to it."

"You bet we can," agreed Ray emphatically, his face flushing just a little. "I didn't really mean that we wanted to knock holes in your chimneys," and he turned apologetically to Mrs. Rosewood. "Only the chimney is so big that there might be a secret chamber in it and, if we made a hole in it, we might find it," and again his eyes turned longingly to the huge bulk of the chimney's foundation.

"Come, I see we will have to remove that boy from temptation, or he will soon be digging into that chimney with his finger nails. I declare, how fast the time has gone!" and Aunt Betty glanced up from a look at her watch. "Do you know that it is after five o'clock? We must say our good-byes to Mrs. Rosewood and be going," and she led the way out of the cellar and back on the long front porch of the house.

"But, before we go," and Constance, who had been holding a whispered conversation with a number of her fellow Boulderites, turned to Aunt Betty, "the Boulder Club

wishes to thank Mrs. Rosewood for—for her kindness and courtesy in opening this dear old house to us. We have had a most delightful and interesting time here, have we not?"

"Yes!" yelled every member of the Boulder

Club.

"And now," continued Constance, "to show our further appreciation of her kindness, let us give the Boulder Yell in her honor. Everybody stand and face Mrs. Rosewood, please, and yell the last line this way: 'Rosewood! Rosewood!! Mrs. Rosewood!!!"

In a moment all the Boulderites were on their feet and facing Mrs. Rosewood, with mouths open ready for the yell.

"Ready!" called Constance, gesticulating with her right hand like a choirmaster. "One—two—three—YELL!"

"Hi! Yi! Ki!

Biss! Boom! Bi!

Who-are-we?

Who-are-we?

Can't you see, O you dub?

We are the Boulder Club!

Rosewood! Rosewood!! Mrs. Rosewood!!!"

yelled the combined voices of the Boulder Club, at the top of their combined lung-power, while Mrs. Rosewood stood flushing and bowing her delight at this noisy but thoroughly girl-like and boy-like way of showing

appreciation.

After the yell all shook hands with Mrs. Rosewood, each thanking her individually for the good time he or she had had and for the ice-cream; and then, yelling their good-byes and waving their adieus as long as they were in sight of the house, they passed through the spacious yard, under the arch of the old stone gateway and out on the public highway. As they came out on the road, a red automobile, with three men in it, whirled by them and turned into the roadway running from the public road to the historic old house they had just left.

"I wonder what Dean Alton, the New York lawyer, can be doing here," and the eyes of Constance followed curiously after the red automobile. "That thin-faced, white-haired man, sitting in the back seat, I am sure was Dean Alton, a New York City lawyer, who

lives right across the street from where we do. I have seen him hundreds of times and I would know him anywhere. There is usually trouble wherever he goes. I hope his coming here does not mean trouble for Mrs. Rosewood."

Constance's face clouded at the thought.

"I fervently second your hope," and Aunt Betty turned a troubled face to Constance. "But the man in the seat with your New York lawyer was a lawyer from Newburg; and, when two lawyers come together like that something is surely brewing. I do hope that their coming bodes no ill to Mrs. Rosewood, she has already had more than her share of this world's troubles; but I am afraid that it does. I have heard that she is in financial difficulties, that there is even danger of her losing her home—her home and the home of her ancestors for so many years."

"What? Lose that dear old house!" and the quick tears gathered in Williamina's eyes, while all the children crowded sympathetically around Aunt Betty.

"You don't mean that there is danger of

Mrs. Rosewood losing this place, where she has lived all her life and where her fathers have lived before her, do you?" questioned Constance anxiously. "Why, she is old. What could she do? Where could she go? She has no relatives living, you said; and she must love this dear old place almost as much as life."

"Yes," answered Aunt Betty sadly, "that is exactly what I mean. I would not have spoken to you of her money troubles, if they were not already common knowledge in the neighborhood. Mrs. Rosewood is one of the dearest old ladies that ever lived, but she is not a business woman, and she has mortgaged everything she owns—house, lands, even the furniture—for all that they are worth; and now the mortgages are due and foreclosure proceedings have been begun, so I am told. Doubtless the two lawyers have come to consult her on these very matters."

"What a shame!" exclaimed Ethel indignantly. "Why could they not wait until she had gone! She—she can't live many years longer anyhow, and it would mean so much to her to spend the last years of her life in her old home."

"O, if we could only find that buried treasure for her!" cried Williamina. "If we only could!"

"We may! We might! At least we must try," declared Ray. "I wish she would let us dig a hole in the bottom of that big chimney. We might find the treasure there."

"I fear our hopes of finding the buried treasure are vain," Aunt Betty said sadly, "unless we can find the key that will unlock the mystery of the cryptic words written on the torn parchment."

"But the officer must have left a copy of the paper and the key with his wife," interjected Constance excitedly; "so that if anything happened to him, she could secure the treasure; and we might find that. Now, wouldn't it be great, if we only could find the treasure?" and Constance's eyes sparkled. "Just like a story in a book; and Mrs. Rosewood could live happily ever afterward."

"We surely must have a try," declared Ray. "Do you suppose Mrs. Rosewood would let us

look through the house, just to see if we could find any clue to where the treasure is buried?"

and he turned eagerly to Aunt Betty.

"I am sure she would," she answered. "But there would be little use of our searching the house, it has been searched hundreds of times already. However, I will think the matter over carefully. In the meantime you can all be thinking about it, too; and, when we have our next Boulder Club meeting, we can compare notes and talk it over and decide whether or not it would be best to trouble Mrs. Rosewood again. But, here we are at the parting of the ways," and Aunt Betty halted at a fork in the road, where it divided into two roads. "Now," and she glanced down at her watch, "you must all be hurrying home, or your mothers will begin to worry."

"And remember," cautioned Constance, "that the Boulder Club is to meet day after to-morrow afternoon at one o'clock, prompt.

Let every member be present."

"You bet we will be there!" declared Ray.

"I wouldn't miss it for anything."

"But I don't see how the Thinkout Commit-

tee is going to think out anything for us to do that will be as interesting as what we did this afternoon," Williamina wondered.

"O, you don't know our Adviser Extraor-dinary and Counselor Plenipotentiary!" and Mildred smiled mysteriously. "It's going to be like a continued story. We only just got the interest started to-day. But, I must be hurrying home, or mother will scold. Goodbye to all who are not going my way," and Mildred, with four of the other Boulderites, hurried off down one of the roads, while Aunt Betty and the rest of the club took the other road.

# CHAPTER XIII

### THE MEN IN THE RED AUTOMOBILE

PROMPTLY at one o'clock on the afternoon of the day of the next meeting of the Boulder Club, Constance stepped on the flat top of the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs, where already the council-fire was burning. Instantly there was a rush of many feet; and the council-fire in the center of the great stone was quickly surrounded by a circle of bright-faced girls and boys, who at once threw back their heads and gave the yell of the Boulder Club.

"There, I think that will tell everybody within ten miles that the Boulder Club is now in session," and Constance smiled and called the club to order.

The roll-call—not a member was absent—and the minutes of the previous session were

quickly read and approved. Evidently all were in a great hurry to get to the report of the Thinkout Committee; for there was a look of impatient expectancy, of suppressed excitement, on the face of each young Boulderite, as if he or she were expecting some special announcement, or had some special announcement to make; consequently when Constance declared that, if there was no further business to come before the club, they would now listen to the report of the Thinkout Committee, all eyes were turned with unusual interest to Mildred, who, with a flushed face and sparkling eyes, at once arose to her feet.

"The Thinkout Committee," she began, "has been very busy; or, rather, our Adviser Extraordinary and Counselor Plenipotentiary has been very busy, with the result that some discoveries have been made that will be of the greatest interest to all of us; and we have planned to do something that we hope will be of real help to Mrs. Rosewood, who is desperately in need of help. Why," and Mildred's face and eyes glowed with indignation, "they are going to take the dear old home,

where she was born and has lived all her life, away from her and send her to a Home for Old Women! Send Mrs. Rosewood to a Home for Old Women! That's what those lawyers in the red automobile called to tell her, that she must give up her old home—"

"What a wicked shame!" broke in Williamina indignantly, as Mildred paused to catch her breath. "But, why does Mrs. Rosewood let them? Isn't she in her own house? Why didn't she set the dog on those two lawyers

and chase them off the place?"

"O, it's all on account of a lot of money," explained Mildred, "and a mortgage that's going to be foreclosed or something; and the law is all on their side; and they can turn Mrs. Rosewood out of her own house and she can't help herself. We've just got to help her, if we possibly can."

"But—but, what can we do?" protested Arthur. "We're only kids; and what can kids like us do against a man like Dean Alton. Dad knows him; and he thinks him the meanest and smartest lawyer in New York City."

"We can, at least, try to do something," and

Mildred turned indignantly to Arthur. "And sometimes even kids can do things—that is, when they do not get cold feet too easily," she added scornfully. "At least we are going to try to help Mrs. Rosewood; and Aunt Betty has thought out a way that promises something. She has found out all about Mrs. Rosewood's money troubles. They are terrible; but I do not know enough about such things to explain them, and so I am going to ask her to tell you all about them and also to explain how she thinks we might be of help. Now, I yield the floor-stone, I mean," and Mildred glanced down at the big rock on which she was standing, "to our Adviser Extraordinary and Counselor Plenipotentiary," and she bowed to Aunt Betty and sat down.

All eyes now turned with eager expectance to Aunt Betty, who at once arose, a look of anxiety and concern on her usually placed face.

"Mildred," she began, going at once to the heart of the matter, "has asked me to explain Mrs. Rosewood's money troubles and to tell you how I think we can be of help to her.

You see, I am taking it for granted that each of you is a good friend of Mrs. Rosewood and will be willing to help her in any way possible."

"Yes, yes!" chorused a dozen voices. "We'd do anything to help Mrs. Rosewood. Only tell us how."

"We'd be wretches, if we wouldn't," declared Constance emphatically. "Say, but I'd just like to tell that Dean Alton, or whoever is the cause of this trouble, what I think of him!"

"Possibly you may have the opportunity," conjectured Aunt Betty gravely. "But I know you are all anxious to get down to the facts; and so I will tell you, in as few words as possible, just what we have found out and what we propose doing. I spent all day yesterday in Newburg, looking up the money part of the trouble; and I find that Mrs. Rosewood has mortgaged the house and other buildings and every acre of land she possesses for more than could be hoped to be realized at a forced sale; and that, in addition, she has placed a mortgage on all her furniture in a pathetic,

but vain, effort to raise money enough to keep her in the dear old home as long as she lives; and, finally, that she has reached the point where it is absolutely impossible for her to raise another cent on anything that she possesses. I also discovered, and very much to my surprise, that all these mortgages are held by Dean Alton, that every cent that Mrs. Rosewood owes is owed to Dean Alton. It seems that he has long been wishing to secure the General Knox Headquarters House and estate for a country residence; but Mrs. Rosewood has refused to sell, hoping to the last to keep the old home as long as she lives. So Dean Alton bought up all these outstanding mortgages; and bided his time.

"Day before yesterday, the day we saw Dean Alton and the Newburg lawyer ride up to the home of Mrs. Rosewood in the red automobile, was the last day of grace that the law allows on these mortgages; and Dean Alton was promptly on hand to demand their immediate payment in full or the surrender of the property to satisfy the mortgages.

"Mrs. Rosewood explained to him that she

had been unable to raise the money, although she had tried very hard to do so; and asked him to renew the mortgages for another year. I think Mrs. Rosewood had felt very confident of securing this extension of time; and, consequently, when Dean Alton absolutely refused to renew them, even for another day, and coldly informed her that he would at once begin foreclosure proceedings, the shock -Mrs. Rosewood is seventy-eight years old and not very strong and you can imagine what it means to a woman of her refinement and her age to be told that she must give up her old home, especially when she has no other home, nor relatives, nor friends, only the institutions of charity, to go to-the shock was like the stab of a knife through her old heart. She stood up very straight for a moment, her lips parted, as if she were about to speak; but, before a word came from between them, she crumpled up like a bit of old lace and sank white and senseless to the floor. In the confusion that followed Dean Alton and the Newburg lawyer hurried away; but, early the next morning, two men arrived, who took possession of the house and of all its belongings in the name of the law; and there they are to remain on guard, to see that Mrs. Rosewood does not run off with any of the valuables, until the law has turned the property over to Dean Alton."

"And—and did Mrs. Rosewood di—die?" and Williamina turned a face wet with tears to Aunt Betty.

"No, no. She soon recovered consciousness; but the shock left her too weak to stand; and she is now in bed, a very sick woman, whose only hope is to die before the old home can be taken from her. I spent an hour with her this morning. It was one of the saddest experiences I have ever known. She has no words of complaint, nor of bitterness, not even for Dean Alton.

"'He, doubtless, has done what to him seemed right,' was all the reference she made to him. 'After all,' she added humbly, 'why should I complain? God has been very good in permitting me to live in the dear old home for so many years. Yes, God has been good, very good; and He will not, I know He will

not, desert me now in my old age and feebleness. He will take me home, home,' and her sweet old face lighted up with a smile such as must gladden the faces of angels, when God speaks to them. I am sure she hopes to die before the law can take her home from her; and she will, I am afraid, unless something can be done to bring hope back to her.

"The doctor, Doctor Mahan of Newburg, says that if he could write out a prescription that would guarantee her home to her as long as she lives, he would have her as well as ever in a week's time. 'But,' and the good doctor shook his head dubiously, 'when the only hope that is left is the hope of death, we doctors can do little. No medicine can cure a broken heart; and the thought of leaving her home has broken Mrs. Rosewood's heart. That, my friend, is the true diagnosis of the case,' and he turned abruptly away from me."

"I'd like to smash that Dean Alton one in the face!" and Ray's doubled-up fist gave emphasis to his words.

"Smashing would be too good for him," disagreed Arthur. "He ought to be drawn

and quartered and hanged and electrocuted; and then put into a dark dungeon and fed on bread and water for the rest of his life."

"But, how can we help Mrs. Rosewood? O, we must do something to help her!" and Williamina turned her tear-wet eyes pleadingly to Aunt Betty. "You said you thought we might be of help to her. Hurry and tell us how."

"Have you—have you discovered a clue to the lost treasure?" broke in Ethel, her eyes shining. "O, if we only could find that!"

"No, unfortunately, no," Aunt Betty answered. "We have discovered no clue; and I do not see how we possibly can find the treasure, until we find the key to the writing on the parchment and that seems to have been lost beyond recovery; but I have not yet given up all hopes in that direction; and, if we fail in what we have planned to do to-day and to-morrow, we will have another look at the torn bit of parchment and Mrs. Rosewood's great-great-grandmother's jewel casket. I do not know why, but I feel as if we, the Boulder Club, were, somehow, going to be of help to

Mrs. Rosewood. Possibly it is because we wish so sincerely to be of help; and that the wish is father to the thought. Anyhow, it helps a lot in doing things, just to wish to do them with all one's might and main; and, well, if we wish hard enough and try hard enough, I am sure we can help."

"O, but we do wish to help! And we will try! Only show us how. It would be just too terrible to have Mrs. Rosewood turned out of her dear old home," and Williamina's voice

choked.

"Yes, hurry and tell us something to do. We've been fussing long enough. Now let's do something," and Arthur turned impatiently to Aunt Betty.

"That," and Aunt Betty turned with a smile to Arthur, "would make a splendid motto for our club, 'DO SOMETHING.' But, I know you are all anxious to know what our plans are. We, the Thinkout Committee and I, think that, if we send a committee of say three of our members to New York City to see Dean Alton and explain to him just how Mrs. Rosewood feels about leaving her old home and

how the very thought of her going has already made her sick and how the doctor says that her life is so bound up in her old home that separation from it probably would mean her speedy death, we think that, possibly, when Dean Alton understands all this, he will be willing to arrange matters so that Mrs. Rosewood can keep her old home as long as she lives, which, at the most, can be but a few years longer. I do not see how man born of woman, under the circumstances, could do otherwise. Therefore, I suggest that a committee of three be appointed to go to New York City to-morrow to see Dean Alton in behalf of Mrs. Rosewood."

"Good!" and Ethel jumped to her feet. "I move that such a committee be appointed."

"Second the motion!" cried Jennie.

Constance quickly stated the motion and paused for remarks.

"I don't believe you could reach the heart of that old skinflint with a ten-mile automatic double-barreled diamond drill," declared Arthur cynically. "But anything is worth trying; and so I am in favor of the motion."

There being no further remarks, Constance put the motion and it was carried unanimously.

"Now, who will we have on this commit-

tee?" she asked.

"Aunt Betty for one," urged Jennie. "We want her on it."

"Of course," explained Aunt Betty, "I will go to the city with this committee in my official capacity as Adviser Extraordinary and Counselor Plenipotentiary; but I should not be one of the regular committee. That should be made up from you young Boulderites."

"I think Constance should be one," declared Ray, "because she has lots of nerve and isn't afraid to talk right up to a man. You ought to have heard her give the hired man a jawing the other day for striking her pony with his whip. Gee, but she was hot! I'll bet that hired man don't hit her horse again," and Ray grinned. "I'd like to hear her giving old Dean Alton a piece of her mind. I tell you the chunks are hot, when they come out. Yes, we want Constance on that committee. It will take lots of nerve to face Dean Alton."

"And I think Ray should be on that committee," and Constance's cheeks flushed, "because, if it is nerve that is needed, then Ray certainly should go. He has the most nerve of any boy I know. Why, I didn't say scarcely anything to that hired man—that is, anything in comparison to what he deserved. He hit Beauty so hard a blow with his whip that it raised a big welt on her; and what girl could stand by and see her pony abused that way and keep silent, I'd like to know?"

"O, I guess he deserved all that he got," Ray grinned back. "And, if you will give Dean Alton all that he deserves, you ought to be awarded a gold medal. That's why I'd

like to see you on this committee."

"I think Constance and Ray are all right," assented Ethel, "for the—the nervy part of the committee. Now we want someone who can look teary and appealing-like; and I think Williamina, with her big dark eyes, that fill so easily with tears, is just the one. She can touch Dean Alton's heart, if any one can."

"Good!" declared Aunt Betty. "Constance and Ray and Williamina will make a splendid committee. Miss President," and she turned to Constance, "I move that Constance and Ray and Williamina be the members of this committee."

The motion was quickly seconded and unan-

imously carried.

"We will go on the early morning train," advised Aunt Betty, "so there must be no over-

sleeping by the committee."

"Now that that is settled, what are we going to do this afternoon?" and Arthur turned an eager face to Aunt Betty. "You said something about having something planned out for this afternoon that might be of help to Mrs. Rosewood."

"Yes," replied Aunt Betty, "we have planned something to do this afternoon; but I fear it will not be very successful. We thought there might be a possibility of our finding the entrance to the secret tunnel, running from the old house to Murderer's Creek, if there is such a tunnel, by searching along the banks of the creek, although, to tell the truth, I have not much faith in that secret tunnel legend. But, as Arthur says, anything is

worth trying; and, if there is such a tunnel, like as not that is the place where the treasure is hidden."

"O, but wouldn't it be great, if we should find the tunnel, with the treasure in it!" and Williamina's eyes shone with excitement. "And wouldn't it make Mrs. Rosewood happy! Come, let us start at once."

"I move that we adjourn and begin the hunt for the secret tunnel," Arthur cried. "It will be great fun, even if we don't find it; and, if we should find it! Great Smoke!" and the look on Arthur's face finished the sentence more expressively than words could possibly have done.

Two minutes later the Boulder Club had adjourned until the next meeting-day; and its members were hurrying on their way to begin the search along the shores of Murderer's Creek for the entrance to the secret tunnel.

# CHAPTER XIV

### THE RIVAL MASCOTS

"WE will go down the Forge Hill Road to the bridge," said Aunt Betty, as she and her little party passed out of the Field of the Great Stones and onto the public highway; "and, from the bridge, we will go up Murderer's Creek to The Glen, searching very carefully as we go along the bank for the entrance to the secret tunnel. If there is any such a tunnel, its opening must be somewhere between the bridge and The Glen."

"Well, I think it is true and I hope we find it," asserted Arthur stoutly. "If there was no secret tunnel, how was it that Kitty Wyndt vanished so mysteriously and was never found? That's what I'd like to know. Healthy girls don't disappear in thin air, like

smoke."

"And—and we might find the skeleton of Kitty Wyndt and her British lover locked in each other's arms," and Jennie shuddered and drew closer to Aunt Betty.

"Ah, cut it out!" and Ray turned impatiently to Jennie. "We are not on the hunt for hugging skeletons. What we want is to find the hidden treasure, so we can help Mrs. Rosewood; and—"

"Here we are at the Forge Hill Road," interrupted Aunt Betty, as the little company came to the junction of two roads. "It is only a short walk along a very beautiful road to the bridge from here."

"But, why do they call it the Forge Hill Road?" queried Ethel. "I don't see what a forge has to do with a hill or a road."

"Its name, as many names do here, goes back to things Revolutionary. It is called the Forge Hill Road, because it goes over a hill and passes the site of a famous forge of Revolutionary days, where the great links that made up the great iron chain that was stretched across the Hudson River to stop the British ships, were forged. You can still see

a few of the old and rusted links of the giant chain in the grounds of the Washington Headquarters House at Newburg. We'll have a look at the site of the forge before beginning our search for the secret tunnel. It is only a few rods from the bridge."

"And there's the bridge now," cried Ray, as the road made a slight turn and brought into view a modern iron bridge, spanning the

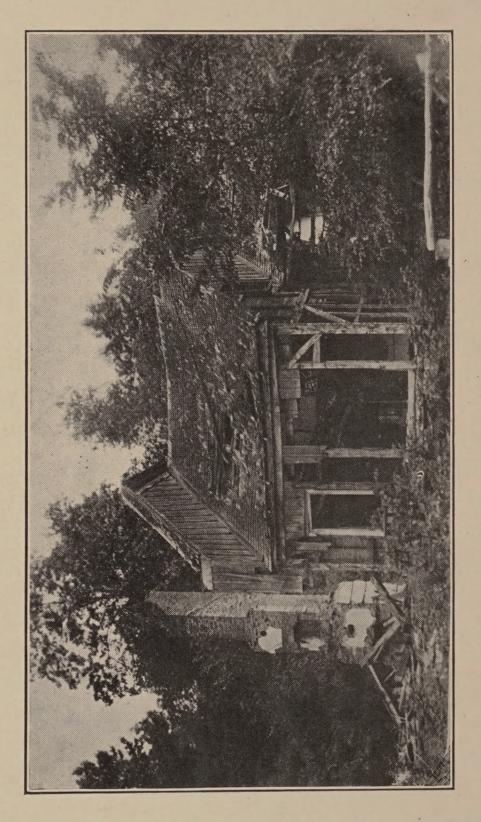
hurrying waters of Murderer's Creek.

In a few minutes the little company had crossed the bridge and stood before a huge block of stone that marked the site of the old

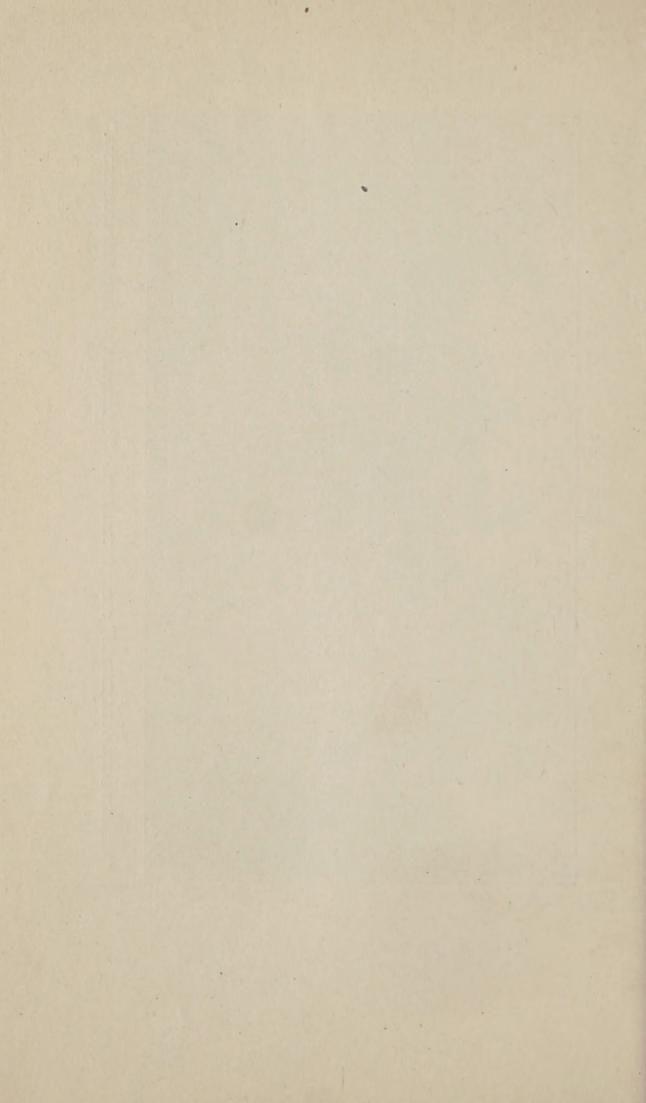
forge.

"Well, it couldn't have been much of a forge," Arthur declared disgustedly, as he looked around the barren spot that showed scarcely a vestige of its former occupancy. "Why, there isn't a sign of it left, not so much as a pile of crumbling stones, only a stone monument."

"O, but look over there!" cried Williamina, excitedly pointing a little way up and across the road to where the ruins of an old house showed, half-hidden by ingrowing trees and



"THERE ARE THE RUINS OF SOMETHING." "OH, BUT LOOK OVER THERE!" CRIED WILLIAMINA.



bushes. "There are the ruins of something! Maybe it is the forge. See the big chimney, now partly tumbled down, and the tumbletydown old house. Come, let's see what it is," and she started off on the run toward the ruins, followed by all the other Boulderites.

In a short time all the children were poking around excitedly amongst the fallen timbers and boards and stones and plaster of the ruins and wondering audibly who could have lived there and why the house had been deserted and allowed to tumble to pieces.

"My, but if these old walls could only talk, couldn't they tell us some interesting stories about the past!" and Constance paused and looked musingly around. "Think of all the people who must have been born and lived and died here; and now not one of them is alive and the house that sheltered them has fallen to pieces; and-"

"O, just see what I have found!" broke in Williamina, who had been poking about with a stick in the rubbish that covered the rotting floors, as she suddenly bent and picked up the china head of a doll, with a small hole broken in the back of the head, but with the face, except for the dirt and a slight fading in the coloring of the cheeks and lips, as perfect as the day it first delighted the heart of its little mother. "I found it in a hole under an old board that looked as if it had not been moved for a hundred years. Hasn't it a sweet face?" and she began tenderly and carefully wiping off the dirt with her handkerchief.

In a moment she was surrounded by all the girls.

"What a little beauty she must have been!" exclaimed Ruth, her eyes fixed in loving admiration on the smiling china face. "Do let me hold her," she pleaded, reaching out both hands.

But Williamina would not relinquish her treasure just yet; and, pressing a kiss on the still smiling lips, snuggled the head up close to her bosom.

"And to think that, probably, the little girl who was mother to this doll has long since grown up, lived her life and died long before we were born, while the pretty doll head still smiles its china smile," and Constance's eyes

fixed themselves pensively on the head snug-

gled up in Williamina's arms.

"'Still smiles her china smile!" How sad!" grinned Ray, rubbing his eyes with both fists. "Lend me your handkerchief, Con, I feel like overflowing."

"O, shut up! You are nothing but a boy!" retorted Constance, as all the girls turned in-

dignantly on Ray.

"You don't know how girls feel about dolls," protested Williamina; and real tears gathered in her eyes and she hugged the doll head closer to her than ever.

"What a fuss to make over a dirty, broken, doll head that wasn't worth picking up in the first place," and Arthur turned disgustedly to Aunt Betty. "Come, let's get away from this old house, before we find any more silly girl truck. We are out to look for a secret tunnel, not for broken doll heads. Throw the dirty old doll away and forget it," and Arthur turned impatiently to Williamina.

"I will not," retorted Williamina indignantly. "I will keep the dear little head as

long as I live,"

"And the doll head is really worth keeping," approved Aunt Betty. "The head must be over a hundred years old; and, if you will fit a body to it and dress it up in Colonial style, you will have a real Colonial doll, something that very few little girls have. But, Arthur is right. It is time we were on our way. Wrap up the doll head carefully, Williamina, for there is no road up Murderer's Creek and we will have to make our way as best we can over stones and through brush and it would be too bad if anything should happen to that doll head, now that it has found a little mother after being an orphan for so many years."

One of the girls wore a light shawl; and Williamina wrapped her treasure safely in

this shawl.

"I—I feel as if the finding of this doll head was going to bring us luck," she said, as she

pressed the bundle close to her bosom.

"O, let's make the doll head our mascot!" cried Jennie delightedly. "It does seem queer that we should find that doll head after all these years; and, maybe, it will bring us good luck."

"Splendid!" agreed Constance. "And Williamina shall be the Custodian of the Mascot, because she found it; and she must bring it with her to every club meeting; and—"

"I'd sooner have a one-horned goat than a broken old doll head for a mascot!" inter-

jected Arthur disgustedly.

"Or the left hind leg of a one-eared rabbit, cut off with a dull knife, under a full moon, shining over the left shoulder," grinned Ray. "But," he added magnanimously, "let the girls have the doll head for their mascot, if they want it. Mascots don't amount to shucks anyway, besides we boys can get a mascot of our own."

"Bully idea! We boys will have our own mascot; and then we'll see which mascot brings the club the best luck. Now, what shall ours be?" and Arthur looked searchingly about the ruins.

"Begorra, I've got him!" suddenly yelled Jerry, exultingly making a dive for a corner of the ruins, just as a half-grown, coal-black kitten poked its little nose out from between two boards, behind which it had evidently been taking its after-dinner nap. "There's our mascot! The darlint!" and Jerry's fingers held up triumphantly the startled kitten.

"Gee, what luck!" shouted Ray. "A black cat! Couldn't have been better, if we had had a mascot made to order. Hurrah for Jerry! He shall be the Guardian of the Black Cat, our mascot!"

The boys now all crowded around Jerry and the black kitten; and even the girls cast many curious glances in the direction of the black cat; but they remained loyal to their mascot and refused to touch the black kitten, for, as Jennie said, "it might break our luck," and they were not going to run any such chances.

"Now we'll see who has the best mascot," Arthur boasted, turning triumphantly to the girls. "Ours is alive, and it's black, and it's a cat," he ended exultingly.

"Pshaw, who ever heard of a black cat bringing anybody luck?" scoffed Constance. "Anyway we girls are satisfied with our mascot; and, of course, if you boys are satisfied with a black cat for your mascot, that's your business, not ours, only it's nice to have both sides satisfied."

"O, we boys are satisfied all right," asserted Ray confidently. "Now for the hunt! If a black cat and a hundred-year-old-broken-china doll head won't bring us luck, then I don't know what will. Come, let's be off. We've fussed here long enough," and he turned impatiently to Aunt Betty.

"Yes, now that we have two such mascots, we certainly ought to corner about all the luck this side of the Hudson River. Come on. We will put them to the test," and Aunt Betty started off down the road toward the bridge, followed by all the others, Williamina hugging her wrapped-up doll head close and shyly casting envious glances at the little black kitten in Jerry's arms; and Jerry, flanked on each side by Ray and Arthur, proudly carried the kitten.

### CHAPTER XV

#### THE HUNT FOR THE SECRET TUNNEL

Down the road and across the bridge hurried the children, each one eager to begin the hunt for the lost tunnel.

"Now we must keep our eyes peeled for signs of the opening," Arthur advised pretentiously, as all scrambled down the steep bank to the shore of Murderer's Creek," because it is quite sure to be hidden by overgrowing bushes or huge rocks. Why, it might even have a door of rock, that would swing open only when touched at a certain point. I've read a lot about hidden tunnels and such things."

"Thank you," commented Constance sarcastically, interrupting before Arthur could get a fresh start. "It was awfully kind of you to give us all that information; and I am sure you feel better now and need a rest, so give someone else a chance to say something. Aunt Betty looks as if she might have something interesting to tell us. Out with it, please," and Constance turned a smiling face to Aunt Betty.

"Well," laughed Aunt Betty, "if my counsel is to share the fate of Arthur's, I think I had

better keep still."

"O, you are different," returned Constance quickly. "You are old enough to know something—I—I—mean——"

"Thank you," interrupted Aunt Betty, her eyes twinkling at Constance's confusion. "I'll take the privilege of age, then, and suggest that it would be a good plan to spread out up and down the bank, so that we can search the entire bank thoroughly as we move up the creek; and, as Arthur suggested, we must keep our eyes 'peeled,' if we are to find the entrance to the secret tunnel, which now might be almost completely filled up. You boys take the steepest and roughest part of the bank and keep just far enough apart to make a thorough search. Be sure and investigate every hole and depression you find; and shout out, if you

discover anything promising. Now, every-

body get into position."

"I'll take the top part of the bank," cried Ray, as he started to scramble up the steep side.

"Next!" shouted Arthur, hurrying after him.

In a few minutes all the children had spread out, at regular intervals, up and down the bank.

Everybody in position and ready?" called Aunt Betty.

"Yes!" shouted back a dozen excited voices.

"Advance, then, Searchers for the Secret Tunnel!" she cried and immediately started up the stream.

For a few minutes nothing was heard but the snapping of twigs, the crunching of feet and smothered exclamations, as the children made their way slowly and not without difficulty along the steep tree- and brush-overgrown shores of Murderer's Creek. All were too busy searching to do any talking; and each was secretly indulging the hope that he or she would be the lucky one selected by a kindly fate to find the long-lost tunnel; and this hope was enough to stimulate to the utmost every muscle and faculty of their active young bodies.

Possibly for ten minutes the children advanced up the creek in this silent, cautious manner, then, suddenly, Arthur gave a shout that caused all to jump and sent delightful thrills of expectancy tingling through their nerves. And the next moment all were in a mad scramble up the bank to reach the side of Arthur and see what it was that he had discovered.

"O, have you found it? Have you found it?" Williamina panted, her eyes big and round with excitement, as she reached the spot where Arthur, already surrounded by excited girls and boys, stood dramatically pointing to a hollow cavelike depression in the bank, almost completely hidden by overgrowing bushes.

"Looks like it," Arthur replied, his voice trembling with excitement. "But I do not believe I would have found it, if my foot had not tripped on a root and pitched me headfirst into the bushes. When I scrambled up on my hands and knees, I found myself star-

ing straight into that hole."

"Well, well, let's see what all this excitement means," and Aunt Betty gently pushed her way through the circle of agitated girls and boys, with something like a flush of excitement on her own face.

"Arthur has found the secret tunnel! The secret tunnel!" and, in her excitement, Jennie caught hold of her arm and began to dance up and down. "Look there! See, there it is!" and she pointed to the cavelike depression.

Aunt Betty quickly freed herself from the excited Jennie; and, hurriedly pushing through the bushes, made her way to the de-

pression.

The hole was oval in form, some four feet by three feet in diameter, and looked much deeper through the fringe of bushes than it really was.

For a moment Aunt Betty stood in front of the depression, staring down into it. Then she took a long stick and jabbed it about inside the hole, getting down on her knees and partly thrusting her body into the opening. For some two minutes she continued in this position, thrusting here and there with her stick, then she withdrew her head from the hole and, rising to her feet, glanced sharply up and down the bank.

The children had crowded close around the opening, their bodies tense with excitement, their eyes watching every act of Aunt Betty, too deeply interested to utter a word or make a movement; but, when Aunt Betty arose, the excitable Jennie could control herself no longer.

"Is it the secret tunnel?" she cried, catching her by the arm and giving her a violent jerk. "O, do tell us, quick!"

"No," answered Aunt Betty, her own face showing disappointment. "Many years ago a huge boulder was imbedded in the bank; and, one spring, loosened by the frosts of the winter and with much of the ground underneath it washed away, the weight of the boulder broke the grip of the bank and the huge rock plunged down to the waters of Murderer's Creek, where, doubtless, we could find it now,

should we look, leaving behind this cavelike

depression in the bank."

"Huh, what a fuss to make over an old boulder hole!" and Ray's face showed his deep disgust. "Art, you deserve a leather medal made out of calfskin for your find," and he grinned with boyish delight over the discomfiture of Arthur, who was beginning to look a bit uncomfortable.

"Better look before you yell, next time," laughed Constance. "But, really," she added magnanimously, "I think that hole would have fooled any of us, even Ray."

"Your cat mascot doesn't seem to know what a tunnel looks like," tantalized Ethel.

"Well, your old doll head hasn't even found a hole in the ground," retorted Ray. "But, come, let's get busy. We've fussed long enough over that old hole."

In a couple of minutes all were back in their places and the slow advance up Murderer's Creek was continued. For many minutes now they moved slowly, but steadily, along the bank of the stream, without one of them finding anything that could possibly be taken for

the entrance to a tunnel. This was monotonous and uninteresting; besides, the traveling was hard, especially for the girls, who were not accustomed to scrambling over stones and through brush; and soon their enthusiasm for the search began to cool, until, when at the end of an hour's hunt, unenlivened by the finding of even another boulder hole, they came to where Silver Stream emptied its waters through The Glen into Murderer's Creek, all were glad that the search was ended.

"Well," Ray declared, as he wiped his face with his handkerchief, for the day was hot, as the little company halted at the entrance to The Glen, "of all the fake old yarns I've heard, that about the secret tunnel is the fakedest. I'd like to soak the fellow's head who first told it for about an hour in the water there," and he pointed to Murderer's Creek.

"But, it is no real sign there is no tunnel, because we did not find it," Constance asserted, her belief in the romantic legend dying hard. "The entrance might be all stopped up now, or we might have missed it."

"Well, we sure did miss it!" and Ray's face

pictured his disgust and his disappointment.

"And I felt almost sure that we would find it, because we needed to find it so much," mourned Williamina. "Poor Mrs. Rosewood! What will she do if we cannot help her?"

"O, we haven't pulled out all the irons we have in the fire yet," encouraged Aunt Betty.

"Anyhow there's no need of yelling for cream, after the milk is spilt, as dad says," Ray admonished, suddenly recovering all the buoyancy of his spirits, after the manner peculiar to boys. "Now, what next?" and he turned inquiringly to Aunt Betty.

"Next, we'll take a rest on that large flat boulder," and she pointed to a huge flat-topped rock that lay half in and half out of the waters of Murderer's Creek; "and use our thinkers for a little while in place of our legs.

Then we will explore The Glen."

"And can we take off our shoes and stockings and let our feet hang down into the water?" queried Jennie delightedly.

"Yes, but be very careful and not slip off

the rock into the water."

## HUNT FOR SECRET TUNNEL 137

In a very short time the shoes and stockings were off the feet of all the children and they were seated on the big rock, with their feet hanging down into the water.

The spirits of all had been a little depressed by their failure to find the hidden tunnel; but, after they had sat on the big rock, with their toes in the cool water, for a few minutes, all their usual liveliness came back; and, when, after a short rest, they had hurried their feet back into their shoes and stockings and had started up the Glen, they were again their merry, laughing, shouting selves.

### CHAPTER XVI

#### A WONDERFUL MASCOT

THE Glen is a deep wooded ravine, with huge water-worn boulders, some of them nearly as large as small houses, piled one on top of the other along its bottom and sides. Its banks are steep and covered with trees, whose overhanging branches form a canopy of green that shuts out the direct rays of the sun and adds to the charm of the wild and picturesque scene. Along its shadowy bottom, in and out among the rocks, winds Silver Stream, now but a narrow ribbon of silver that a child can jump across, having generously given the greater part of its flow to slake the thirst of a near-by city. Hither, into these cool depths, Aunt Betty now led her little flock of curious and interested explorers.

"Say, but this makes me think of the Rock-

ies!" declared Ray enthusiastically, the moment his eyes glanced up the boulder-strewn glen. "It is just like one of those rocky gulches one reads about."

"Well, it certainly is rocky enough to be the Rockies," agreed Constance. "I did not suppose there was such a place as this within miles of here. Why, so far as looks go, we might be in the depths of an unexplored wilderness—and to think we are only a few miles from one of the largest cities in the world!"

"O, but wouldn't this have been a splendid place in which to hide the treasure?" exclaimed Mildred. "I wonder if any one has thought to look for it here. There are hundreds of places, under these big rocks, where it might have been hidden and where it would be almost impossible to find it, unless one knew where to look. I shouldn't be surprised if it were hidden here."

"Neither would I," declared Arthur emphatically. "It is just the place a man would pick for such a purpose. I'll bet that all that gold and silver is hidden away somewhere

under one of these rocks, safely locked in an iron-bound chest. And—and we might stumble upon it, if we looked."

"Sure, and we might find a needle in a hay

stack, if we looked," scoffed Ray.

"Let's look anyway," urged Jennie. "Maybe our mascot will bring us luck. Is it safe?" and she turned to Williamina, Custodian of the Mascot.

"Yes," and Williamina snuggled the old doll head up close to her bosom. "I wouldn't break it for anything. And I am sure it is going to bring us luck."

"What, that broken old thing bring us luck!" and Arthur's face expressed his scorn. "Well, if we've got to depend on that for luck, we'll never find the treasure. But, fortunately, we boys have a real live mascot," and he waved his hand toward Jerry. "Trot her out; but don't let her get away from you on your life. Let's see what she thinks of the situation."

Jerry carefully inserted one hand under his coat, where he had placed the mascot for safe keeping, and brought out the little black kit-

ten; and, sitting down on a rock, held the cun-

ning little animal in his lap.

The kitten blinked her eyes and looked around; and then daintily lifted one of her little paws and held it posed in such a way that it pointed directly up The Glen.

"Bless me!" cried Jerry, his face flushing with excitement. "See, the mascot points with

her toes where we shall go!"

"Up The Glen! She's pointing up The Glen!" cried Arthur. "That means we are to search The Glen for the treasure. That's the kind of a mascot to have," and he turned triumphantly to the girls. "One that is alive and knows something and not a broken old doll head, with a hole in it. Come on. It's up The Glen for us. Now, all get long sticks and poke around in the holes. Great Christmas! wouldn't it be bully, if we should find the lost treasure!" and, picking up a long stick, Arthur started up The Glen, stopping to poke the stick around in every hole that he saw, followed by all the others, now nearly as excited as was he.

This was fun and interesting and exciting

for a short time; but, when, in the course of a half-hour, all their excited pokings into holes and clambering over rocks had brought to light nothing of interest, the sport began to pall.

"That mascot of yours is no good. I'm tired of poking in holes," and Constance threw down her stick in disgust. "If the treasure is hidden in this glen, it would take an army a year to find it. I quit," and she sat down on a huge rock.

The others all quickly grouped themselves around her on the rock.

"Better trot out that mascot of yours again and see what she thinks of the situation now," laughed Ethel. "Perhaps she will point out the treasure this time."

"Sure," grinned Ray. "Jerry," and he turned to the Guardian of the Black Cat, "you are master of ceremonies. Kindly give another demonstration of the power of our mascot for the benefit of these doubting sisters."

Jerry smiled broadly and again carefully pulled out the little black kitten from her retreat under his coat and cautiously sat her

down on his lap.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen," and Ray made a sweeping, if not graceful, gesture with his two hands, "observe the actions of this cat and note their mysterious-mysterious-"

"Significance," suggested Constance.
"Right, lady. Thank you. Note their mysterious significance. Now observe-"

The kitten stretched herself; and then, to the amusement of all, especially the girls, she lay down and contentedly curled herself up in Jerry's lap.

But Ray was equal to the occasion.

"Observe," he declared oracularly, "how the mascot seeks repose in the lap of her guardian, plainly indicating it is time for us to take a rest."

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" exclaimed Con-

stance sarcastically.

"Poke her up, you chump! Poke her up!" hoarsely whispered Ray, under cover of the hearty laugh that followed.

Jerry poked. The kitten, thus reminded of her duty, stood up, but stood still, to the discomfiture of Ray, who could discover no special significance in this action or, rather, lack of action; but quick-witted Jerry again proved himself a worthy mascot guardian.

"The tail!" he cried. "See, she points with

her tail!"

And, indeed, it did look as if the kitten might be using her tail for that purpose; for she held it stiffly outstretched, pointing up the steep bank of the Glen at an angle of about forty-five degrees.

"Now, ladies and gentlemen"—Ray caught on quickly—"observe that tail. See how stiffly it is held, pointing in a certain direction, thus indicating the exact place where we should look for the hidden treasure. Now, with your kind permission, I will sight along the tail and ascertain the exact spot to which it is pointing," and Ray, to the delight of all, knelt by the side of Jerry and gravely squinted with one eye along the black tail of the black cat, as if it were the barrel of a rifle.

"Eureka!" and Ray jumped quickly to his feet. "See that hole under that big rock about halfway up the side of the bank. As sure as I am a borned sinner the tail points straight into that hole; and I'll bet that's where the treasure is hidden. Hurrah, for the boys' mascot! Come on! Let's investigate!" and, grabbing up his poking-stick, Ray started up the steep bank toward the hole as fast as his feet and hands could take him. With much laughter and merry shoutings, the others, catching up their poking-sticks, followed.

The side of the bank here is formed of huge boulders, piled one on top of another; and, about halfway up the side, one of the largest of these boulders had fallen on top of two other boulders in such a way as to roof over a space between the two under rocks, forming a narrow, cave-like cavity about a foot wide by three feet high and extending back under the rock farther than the eyes could see. The kitten's tail, according to Ray, had pointed directly into this hole.

In two minutes Ray and the other children had reached this opening; and each, in turn, was peering excitedly into its dark

depths.

"It certainly does look like a good hiding-

place," admitted Ethel, as she made way for Constance to look in the hole. "And it is up so high that no water could get into it, even during the spring freshets. But, how are we to find out what is in it? It is hardly large enough for any one to crawl into."

"Why, the same way we explored the other holes—poke in our sticks. Now, if you will stand back a little, Con, so as not to be in my way, I'll see whether or not the iron-bound treasure-chest is hidden in the dark depths of this hole," and Ray stepped in front of the hole, the long stick in his hand.

"O, what if we should find the treasure!" exclaimed Williamina, crowding a bit closer to Ray. "Wouldn't Mrs. Rosewood be the

happy woman?"

"No danger," declared the skeptical Constance. "I didn't suppose boys could be so silly as to take directions from a cat's tail in a lost-treasure hunt."

"But, it might happen to be in there, you know," affirmed Jennie, who was always half-expecting something mysterious to happen. "That kitten's tail might just have happened

to point toward it. I've read about just such

queer things happening."

"Sure," grinned Ray. "If the treasure is not in there, why should the cat's tail have pointed into the hole? That's what I'd like to know. Now, everybody keep quiet and listen with both ears, so that we can hear when the end of the stick goes thud-thud against the iron-bound treasure-chest," and he thrust the long stick into the hole and began poking it around inside.

"Gee!" and Ray's face showed sudden excitement. "There is something in there! I can feel it with the stick—Jumping Moses!" and, with a wild yell, Ray dropped the stick and sprang backward so suddenly that he lost his balance and rolled sprawlingly down the side of the Glen, just as a little animal, with broad white stripes running along his back, scurried out of the hole and darted swiftly into another hole under a near-by rock, while the air became heavy with a nauseating odor.

The girls screamed, the boys yelled and all tumbled pell-mell down the side of the Glen to where Aunt Betty stood, for the moment fearful that something dreadful had happened to give her young charges such a fright. But her suspense was of short duration; for along with the boys and girls came the odor.

"Phew! A skunk!" she cried. "And so you found a skunk in that hole instead of an ironbound treasure-chest! Well, the little animal won't hurt you—that is, he won't, if you keep far enough away from him! Hope no one was hurt in your mad scramble down the side of the Glen. You all certainly showed speed," and the smile on her face broadened, as she noted that all of the youngsters had reached her side, right side up and safe and sound, except Ray, who had bumped his nose in his tumble, causing it to bleed, and had covered his clothes with dirt. However, the thump on Ray's nose was not at all serious and the bleeding soon stopped, while Jennie and Williamina, who had hurried anxiously to his side at sight of the blood, made short work of the dirt on his clothes.

"I'd like to choke you, you black little rascal!" and Ray, the moment he had his nose under control, shook his fist in simulated wrath at the kitten, now resting quietly in Jerry's lap. "I'll bet you knew that that skunk was in that hole. No more poking into holes under rocks for me."

"Allow me to congratulate you on your wonderful, wonderful mascot!" and Constance made Ray a sweeping courtesy. "Had I not seen it with mine own eyes and smelt it with mine own nose, I would not have believed it. I am sure our mascot could never have found that skunk in that wonderful way."

"Well, I should hope not," declared Ethel emphatically. "Phew, that skunk must have been mostly smell! Let's get out of here. I—I—I've had all the treasure-hunting I want for to-day."

### CHAPTER XVII

"IF WE ONLY COULD DO SCMETHING TO HELP MRS. ROSEWOOD"

No one needed any urging to vacate that part of the Glen; and in a few minutes more they had climbed the steep bank and had come to where a road crossed an old stone bridge that spanned, with a single narrow arch, the waters of Silver Stream.

"Why," exclaimed Mildred, in pleased surprise, the moment the little party came to the bridge, "there's the General Knox Headquarters House! I did not suppose we were within miles of it!"

"Yes," smiled Aunt Betty. "The Glen begins only a short distance from the old house; and the road we are now on was the public road in Revolutionary times and ran directly in front of the General Knox Headquarters

## TO HELP MRS. ROSEWOOD 151

House. This old stone bridge," and she paused on the arch of the bridge, "is a relic of those old days; and, doubtless, Washington, Lafayette, Knox and other men now famous in our history, have often stood where we are now standing and looked with admiration on the beautiful scene before them, even as we are now looking. The scene has changed but little since then; so that our eyes are now beholding almost the same things that the eyes of Washington and his officers beheld in those long-gone days—the old bridge, the hurrying waters of Silver Stream, the mill-dam in the distance, the old house, all were in the beautiful scene then, as they are now."

For a few minutes the interested children stood clustered on the old bridge, admiring the beautiful scene and dreaming of the long-vanished days when Washington and Lafayette, possibly, had stood where they were now standing and looked on the same scene.

"Too bad, it's too bad that Mrs. Rosewood must lose this dear old place, hallowed by so many sacred memories of the past!" sighed Constance. "Now, if we only could do something to really help her; but everything we

try seems to fail."

"O, if we only can!" and Williamina's eyes rested longingly on the old house. "I never wanted to help any one as much as I want to help Mrs. Rosewood; and she needs help so much!"

"Then, just do your best to-morrow, when you interview that old skinflint, Dean Alton," admonished Arthur. "Better have a barrel of tears on tap; for you will have to drown out his heart to find it."

"O, I am sure, when he knows how terribly hard it will be for Mrs. Rosewood to leave her old home, that he will not drive her out; and she nearly eighty years old! I don't believe even Dean Alton could be as cruel as that!"

"I sincerely hope you are right, Williamina. Well, to-morrow will tell; but it is getting late and we must be moving," and Aunt Betty led the way up the road toward the General Knox Headquarters House.

"Can we—do you think it would be all right for us to call on Mrs. Rosewood, to tell her how sorry we are that she is sick and how willingly we could help her in any way we could?" and Ethel turned a pair of solicitous eyes to Aunt Betty.

"I am afraid that the excitement of such a visit would be too much for Mrs. Rosewood just at present. However, I will call and inquire how she is feeling this afternoon; and will see that your message of sympathy and helpfulness is given to her."

Accordingly, when our little company reached the General Knox Headquarters House, Aunt Betty went to the door and knocked softly, while the others hovered together in an anxious group a short distance away.

The door was opened by a big, rough-looking man, who, after regarding the young woman and the group of children back of her curiously for a minute, wished to know what was wanted.

Aunt Betty told him; and the man, with unexpected kindness, hurried away to find if Mrs. Rosewood was in condition to receive callers. In a couple of minutes he was back; and with him came a motherly looking, mid-dle-aged woman, one of Mrs. Rosewood's near neighbors, who told them that Mrs. Rosewood, for the first time in many hours, was sleeping soundly and that the doctor had left orders that she must not be disturbed by any one. She promised to tell Mrs. Rosewood of their call, when she awoke, and to give her their message of sympathy, and thanked them for their offers of help and promised to call on them, if there were need.

"Is she any better to-day?" asked William-

ina anxiously, as the woman paused.

"No, I cannot say that she is," answered the woman. "But we have great hopes of what this long sleep will do for her. The doctor said it was what she needed most. Poor woman, the thought of being driven out of her home, the dear home of her fathers for so many generations, was almost too much for her to bear! Alas, that there should be such cruel people in the world!" and she shook her head mournfully. "But you must excuse me. I have been away from my patient longer now than I should have been. Please make as lit-

tle noise as possible on your way out," and she hurried back into the house.

Not a word was spoken by the saddened children and all walked softly, until the public road was reached.

"Was—was that man who came to the door one of the two men sent by Dean Alton to keep guard over the things in the house, so that none of them would run off?" asked Ethel, as all started down the road toward their homes.

"Yes," answered Aunt Betty. "But the men are not to blame for the seeming harshness of their work. They are only doing their duty; and, I fancy, they are endeavoring to rob the doing of that duty of all the disagreeableness possible. The man who came to the door was very friendly and sympathetic."

"Yes, he was all right, but he looked tough; and, at first, I thought he would set the dog on us; but his face proved worse than his bite," and Ray grinned. "Just the same it seems tough on Mrs. Rosewood to have them there at all, just as if she needed watching! I wish that we could find that hidden treasure. Then

we would have to ask no favors of old Alton; and could send him about his business in a jiffy. Don't you think we'd better have another try for it?" and he turned anxiously to Aunt Betty.

"Possibly we will have another try for the treasure, especially if our mission to-morrow to Dean Alton fails. But, we will have to wait and see what to-morrow brings forth. Well, here we are at the parting of our ways," and Aunt Betty paused, as the little company reached the spot where the road forked. "Now," and she turned to Constance, Williamina and Ray, whose road here separated them from her, "be sure and be up and ready on time to-morrow morning. I will call for you and we will ride to the railroad station together."

"And remember," Constance warned, as Aunt Betty, accompanied by a number of others, started off down the road that led to their boarding places, "that the next meeting of the Boulder Club will be day after to-morrow, at one o'clock, p.m., on the great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs, in the Field of

## TO HELP MRS. ROSEWOOD 157

the Great Stones. Let each member be on

hand promptly."

"You bet!" answered Arthur, who was with Aunt Betty. "We'll be there, dead or alive. Don't forget to bring along your mascot," he added, laughing.

"Sure," answered back Constance. "We couldn't do business without that. Better leave yours at home. We are not going skunk

hunting, you know."

### CHAPTER XVIII

#### WHAT CAME OF THE VISIT TO DEAN ALTON

ON the afternoon of the day of the next meeting of the Boulder Club every member was on hand promptly; and when, at exactly one o'clock, Constance stepped upon the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs and gave voice to the club yell, the response was sudden and enthusiastic; and, in a moment more, the council-fire that glowed near the center of the great stone was surrounded by a circle of eager, anxious-eyed children. There was a look of expectancy, of suppressed excitement on the face of each; for all were "just dying," as Jennie expressed it, to learn the result of the visit to Dean Alton. Had they succeeded in touching the hard heart of the old lawyer? Would they be able to deliver a message of hope and cheer to dear old Mrs. Rosewood?

# THE VISIT TO DEAN ALTON 159

Constance called the club to order; but, before she could start the regular routine of

business, Arthur jumped to his feet.

"Let's cut out all the fussings and trimmings," he demanded. "We are all too anxious to hear about that visit to Dean Alton to bother with such things. Let's have the report at once."

"Yes-yes!" cried half a dozen voices.

"Give us the report. Don't bother with anything else. I move that we have the report now," and Ethel jumped to her feet.

"Second the motion!" almost shouted Ar-

thur.

"I do not think this is strictly according to parliamentary—" began Constance.

"Bother the big words!" interrupted Ar-

thur. "Give us the motion."

"All right," laughed Constance, and put the motion, which was carried unanimously.

"Now tell us," questioned Jennie eagerly, "did you get Dean Alton to let up on Mrs. Rosewood, to agree to allow her to live in the old house as long as she needs a home?"

"No," answered Constance indignantly.

"We did not. He only smiled his wicked, foxy smile and said that he was sorry, but that the law would have to take its course, that, doubtless, Mrs. Rosewood would be better off anyway in some home for dependent old ladies, where she would have the companionship of other women and where she would be taken proper care of, than she would be living almost alone in that dreary old house. even had the effrontery," and Constance's eyes flashed angrily, "to offer to use his influence to get her into a home, where, he smilingly assured us, she would have the best of care. I'd like to have slapped his smiling old mouth, when he said that," and Constance's face flushed, even at the remembrance.

"And I thought, for a moment, that you were going to," declared Ray.

"Wish you had. He deserved it," snapped Jennie. "The mean old skinflint!"

"And—and did you tell him the doctor said it would be the death of Mrs. Rosewood to be driven out of her old home?" Mildred asked, the tears in her eyes, "that even the thought of it had made her sick?"

"We did," answered Constance grimly; "but the old fox only smiled and replied that it was but natural for Mrs. Rosewood to feel badly about leaving her old home, any one would; but that, really, she had no one to blame but herself for the necessity, that, if she had been less extravagant and more businesslike, she might have held on to the old place as long as she lived, that he could see no reason why he, almost a total stranger to her, should be called on to give her a home for the rest of her life, just because she happened to be old and unfortunate, that, if he allowed such sentimental vagaries to govern his business transactions, he soon would be a pauper himself."

"No danger of that," broke in Ray, no longer able to keep silent. "He'll never be a pauper on account of his generosity. Why, he even refused to postpone the—the turning out of Mrs. Rosewood a day, or even an hour, to give us more time to do something. He said that he was only doing what the justice of the law bid him do; and, when Williamina began to plead with him, the tears running down her

face, he grinned and offered her his handkerchief. That made Williamina mad and she called him an ugly old skinflint right to his face."

"Bully for Williamina!" broke in Jerry, a

grin all over his countenance.

"And then his face got hard, like marble," Ray continued; "and he arose from his chair and bowed, politelike, and begged us to excuse him, but, really, he was too busy to allow any more of his time to be taken up by children and a meddlesome young woman and that he would be pleased to bid us good day. Then Aunt Betty got mad; and I guess Dean Alton knows now what other people think of him," and Ray grinned.

"At least he knows what I think of him,"

declared Aunt Betty.

"You bet he does," assented Ray emphatically. "I thought once you were going to slap him one on the face," and his eyes sparkled at the recollection.

"I did lose my temper, that's a fact," admitted Aunt Betty. "But Dean Alton was enough to provoke a saint. However, since

you now all know the result of our mission and that it is useless to hope for anything from Dean Alton, let us drop Dean Alton and take

up some more agreeable subject."

"But, what can we do now to help Mrs. Rosewood?" asked Ethel, her face showing deep concern. "My mother called yesterday afternoon and saw Mrs. Rosewood for a few minutes; and she thinks she can live only a few days, unless something can be done to put new life and hope in her. She says that it is the thought of being driven out of her home that is killing her, that her only hope now is to die before she is obliged to go, that she had rather go to her grave than to some home for dependent old women. It is terrible not to be able to help, when one wants to help so badly! Can't we do something?" and the tears gathered in Ethel's eyes.

"Yes, yes," implored Williamina. "Do tell us something to do? You know Dean Alton told us that the last day of grace in which the—the—what Mrs. Rosewood owes could be paid so that she could keep her home would be to-morrow, so that whatever we do must be

done to-day. Do think up something to do?" and her eyes sought the face of Aunt Betty.

For a moment she sat silent, while the eyes of all were fixed anxiously on her face, then she arose slowly to her feet, her countenance plainly showing the deep concern and dis-

couragement that she felt.

"If we had more time," she began, "we might be able to accomplish something, might find friends who could and would help, might appeal to the Daughters of the Revolution and other patriotic organizations to save the old historic house; but it is impossible to do that now, the time is too short—"

"But, we can have another try for the treasure!" interrupted Arthur excitedly. "It is our only chance now; and we might stumble upon the treasure. Such things have happened."

"Yes," urged Constance, "we must have another try for the treasure. I want to examine that old casket again. There might be a false bottom or some other hiding-place in it, where the key to the lost treasure might be hidden, that no one has yet found. I've read of such hiding-places in caskets like that."

"And I think we ought to knock a hole in the base of the big chimney in the cellar. I—I've felt all along as if a treasure vault might be concealed in that, it is so big. Come on! The treasure is our only hope! We must have another look for the lost treasure. Come on!" and Ray jumped excitedly to his feet.

In a moment more all were on their feet; and all were urging Aunt Betty to take them to the General Knox Headquarters House for another look for the treasure, hidden by Mrs. Rosewood's Revolutionary ancestor so many years ago.

"We will keep very quiet and do nothing to disturb Mrs. Rosewood," pleaded Constance. "She need not even know that we are in the house, unless she is well enough to see us."

"Very well," Aunt Betty yielded. "I hesitated because I thought the excitement of your coming might not be good for Mrs. Rosewood; but, if you will all promise to keep very, very still, we will see what we can do. When I called this morning, Mrs. Rosewood was feeling a little better."

"Hurrah!" and the excitable Arthur threw

his hat up into the air. "Come on!" and he started off in the direction of the General Knox Headquarters House, followed by all the others, thus, abruptly and without any regard to parliamentary usages, bringing an end to this very irregular session of the Boulder Club.

"O, how I hope we do find the treasure!" exclaimed Williamina, as they hurried through the Field of the Great Stones. "Wouldn't it just be great luck, if we should? And I'd like to be the one to pay off old Dean Alton."

"He'd be so mad he'd die of apoplexy or something," grinned Ray. "But, sure now, since you have fixed up your mascot in such grand style, we ought to have all kinds of good luck," and the grin broadened, as his eyes turned to the broken doll head, which Williamina's mother had attached to a doll's body and dressed in full Colonial costume and which Williamina now held tenderly and carefully in her arms. "That dress is perfectly stunning. But. don't imagine yours is the only mascot that can show style. Jerry, trot

out Blackie," and he turned to the little Irish lad.

Jerry smiled all over his face, thrust one hand under his coat and proudly pulled out from underneath its shelter the little black kitten, now decorated with a gorgeous red ribbon, tied in a big bow around her neck, and narrow pink ribbons, tied in little bows midway around her tail and around each leg, just above the paw, while the tail ended in a brilliant-colored tassel of red white and blue streamers.

"There, what do you think of our mascot?" and Ray turned triumphantly to the girls.

"Well, I can't say that I like the color scheme of the decorations," laughed Constance. "However, I fancy, they'll do for such a mascot; but, put not your trust in his tail again. We are not looking for rare perfumes, you know."

"Rank, rank perfumes, you mean," hastily

interposed Ethel.

"Well, our mascot found something, anyway; and that's more than your old doll head has done," Ray answered, flushing. "Wait," smiled Constance, "ours hasn't begun to get in her work yet, while yours has probably done her best."

"Shucks!" laughed Ray, "that wasn't her best. She might point out an elephant or a

hippopotamus the next time."

"We'll be satisfied with the treasure," answered Constance. "But," and her face sobered, "here we are at the house. Now remember, no more loud talking; and we must all move just as silently as possible."

By this time our little company had reached the arched stone gateway that opened from the public road into the parklike yard back of the General Knox Headquarters House; and, as they passed under its heavy stone arch, a look of anxious determination, of a sober earnestness, came on the face of each one; for they realized that, if they failed in the quest they were now about to begin, nothing could save Mrs. Rosewood from the greedy gold-clutch of Dean Alton. They spoke in whispers and walked lightly, as they hurried across the yard and around to the long porch that fronted the quaint old house.

# THE VISIT TO DEAN ALTON 169

"Wait for me here; and keep very quiet," admonished Aunt Betty, as they came to a halt in front of the entrance to the house, "while I find out whether or not Mrs. Rosewood is well enough to see us," and she went to the door and lifted the old knocker and let it sound softly.

## CHAPTER XIX

#### THE OLD DIARY

For ten minutes, although to the anxious boys and girls it seemed nearer an hour, the children waited. Then the door opened and Aunt Betty came out.

"Can we—will Mrs. Rosewood see us?" queried Ethel anxiously, at the top of her whispering voice, the moment Aunt Betty was near enough to hear.

"Yes, for a few minutes. But you must all keep very quiet while in the sick-room and not show any excitement. Mrs. Rosewood is a little stronger and feeling a little better to-day; and Mrs. Brownly, the good neighbor who is now caring for her, does not think it will harm her to see you for a short time, providing you will keep very quiet and do noth-

ing to excite her. Besides, Mrs. Rosewood wishes to see you all."

"We'll be as still as little mouses," promised Williamina; "and not how the least bit of excitement, no matter what happens."

"And can we—did you ask her if we could search the house?" questioned Arthur eagerly.

"Yes, she is willing, only she thinks that it will be useless—it has been searched vainly so often. But, Mrs. Rosewood is waiting," and Aunt Betty led the way into the house.

Mrs. Rosewood lay on a large, old-fashioned bed. The curtains of the one window were drawn; and, in the dim light of the room, the sweet, ivory-white, kindly old face crowned with white hair and lying cupped in a white pillow, had a wondrous spiritualized look, as if the eyes already had been seeing a vision of the glories of paradise.

The children entered the room softly, awed and sobered as they had never been before in their lives. Mrs. Rosewood smiled faintly and, lifting a thin white hand, held it out weakly to Constance, who stood nearest to her.

"I am more than glad to see you, to see you all," she said, as she clasped Constance's hand, while her eyes passed swiftly from face to face. "I have wished to see you very much—you are so young and so full of hope, your presence is like a breath from my own long-long-gone childhood," and she sighed. "But, you will pardon me, I know, if I let this hand-clasp do for all of you. I am not very strong. I—I am really beginning to feel as if I were getting old," and the smile returned to her face.

"Betty tells me that you wish to make a last search for the treasure of my ancestors, hidden for so many years. I appreciate fully the loving motives that prompt you to make this search; but," and the old face saddened, "many have searched and vainly for this same treasure. However, search to your hearts' content. I wish you luck. Now, please, come up close, all of you. I," and the sadness of her face deepened and she dropped Constance's hand and lay very still, while the awed children gathered close to the bedside. "I, before the break comes—You know I must leave

this dear old home soon," and she smiled bravely. "But, before I go, I wish to give each of you a little souvenir, something that you can keep in remembrance of your visit to the old house and to me. Mrs. Brownly," and she turned to the kindly nurse, "please bring me the old casket, the one I had you bring me yesterday."

Mrs. Brownly nodded and smiled and hurried from the room.

"We are very glad to find you looking so well," Constance said, as cheerfully and as hopefully as possible as Mrs. Brownly left the room; "and we hope that it will be only a few days before you will be as well as ever again."

"Thank you," Mrs. Rosewood smiled back. "But, when one is old, health and strength do not come back as quickly as they did in youth. Ah!" and her face lighted up, as she caught sight of the doll Williamina held so carefully and lovingly in her arms. "What a quaint and beautiful doll you have there! May I see it, please? Why, it is dressed like a little lady of the Revolution! And the head, yes, I am sure it belongs to those old days. They do not

make such china doll heads now," and her eyes brightened with interest and pleasure, as Williamina, stepping close to the bedside, sat the doll down on the bed in front of her. "Why, the lady looks as if she might have come fresh from the arms of one of the little maids of that long ago!"

"And maybe she did," smiled Williamina, flushing with pleasure at Mrs. Rosewood's admiration and praise of her doll. "That is, maybe the head did; for I found the head carefully hidden away in the ruins of the old

Ettrick House."

"Did you?" and Mrs. Rosewood's eyes shone with new interest. "Then my own great-grandmother may have kissed the roses on those cheeks!" and she lifted the old doll tenderly and held it up before her eyes; "for she and the little Ettrick girl were great chums and visited each other nearly every day, according to the diary my great-grandmother kept when she was a little girl. She even writes of having a dear china doll that she has named Esther, Queen Esther, yes, I am sure that is the name. Now, what if this

should prove to be that very doll!" and she gently pressed a kiss on one of the rosy cheeks. "We must have a look in that diary some day and see what she says about her china doll. It is all very interesting. Would you like to read the diary?"

"O, I should love to!" and Williamina's eyes sparkled. "And the doll might really have been her doll! Anyway, I am going to name it Queen Esther. And we girls have made it our mascot. Don't you think it makes a lovely mascot?"

"Indeed, I do! And if any mascot ever brought good luck, then this old doll head surely will bring you good luck."

"But, just wait until you see our mascot!" broke in Ray, unwilling longer for the girls' mascot to usurp all the attention. "We boys have a real live mascot; and we, too, found her in the ruins of the old Ettrick house. Jerry," and Ray turned to the sturdy little Irish lad, "show Mrs. Rosewood our mascot."

"Shure and she is the darlint," and the usual grin overspread Jerry's face, as he stepped up to the bedside by the side of Williamina and, thrusting his hand under his coat, proudly pulled out the beribboned kitten and gently placed her down on the bed by the side of the doll.

"O, you little black beauty!" and Mrs. Rosewood laid a hand softly on the kitten's head.

"That is our mascot, the boys' mascot," explained Ray. "Don't you think we have a

dandy mascot?"

"Indeed, you have!" and Mrs. Rosewood gently stroked the soft black back. "If you girls and boys do not have good luck, with two such splendid mascots working for you, then I will lose my faith in mascots."

"And we brought them both along to help

us find the treasure," declared Jennie.

"And I hope they bring you the best of luck— But, here is Mrs. Brownly, with the casket. Now, if you will please take charge of these dear mascots, I'll have Mrs. Brownly place the casket on the bed in front of me."

Williamina and Jerry quickly removed the mascots; and Mrs. Brownly laid the casket

down in their place on the bed in front of Mrs. Rosewood.

Constance's eyes lighted up with interest the moment they rested on the quaint, pearl-in-laid, richly carved casket; for it was the same casket that had so greatly awakened her interest on their first visit to the old house and which she was so anxious to examine again, to see if there was not some secret hiding-place in it where the missing key to the cryptic piece of torn parchment might be concealed.

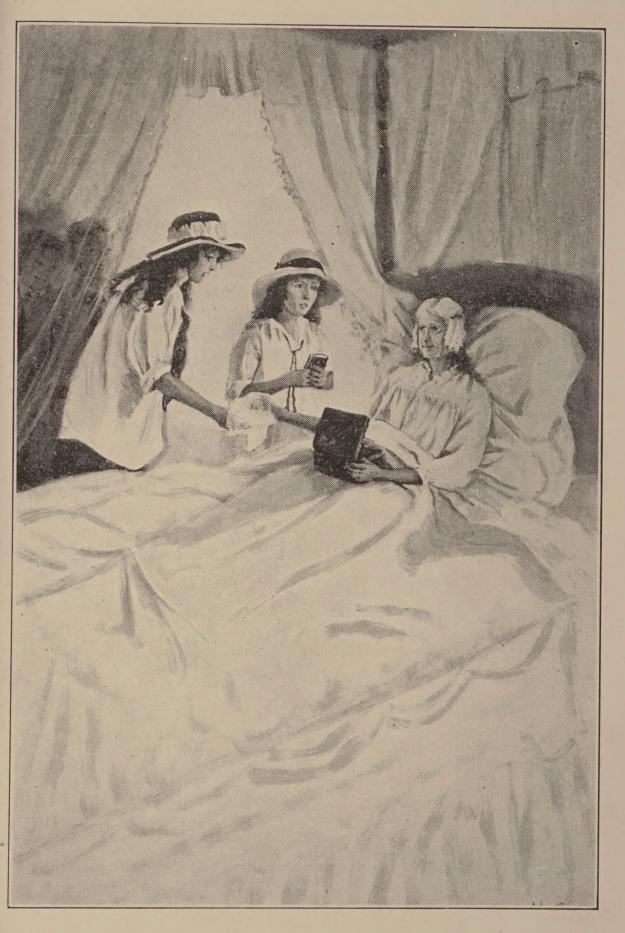
Mrs. Brownly, with the aid of pillows, gently raised Mrs. Rosewood to a half-sitting posture and placed the casket in her lap. Mrs. Rosewood unlocked the casket, with a little gold key that hung from a thin gold chain suspended around her neck, and, slowly opening it, took from out it a much worn, quaint, little, old book, whose originally white blank pages were now yellowed with age and closely written over in a peculiar girlish hand, the ink faded until in places the writing was almost undecipherable.

"This," and Mrs. Rosewood's eyes rested pensively on the little book, "was my great-

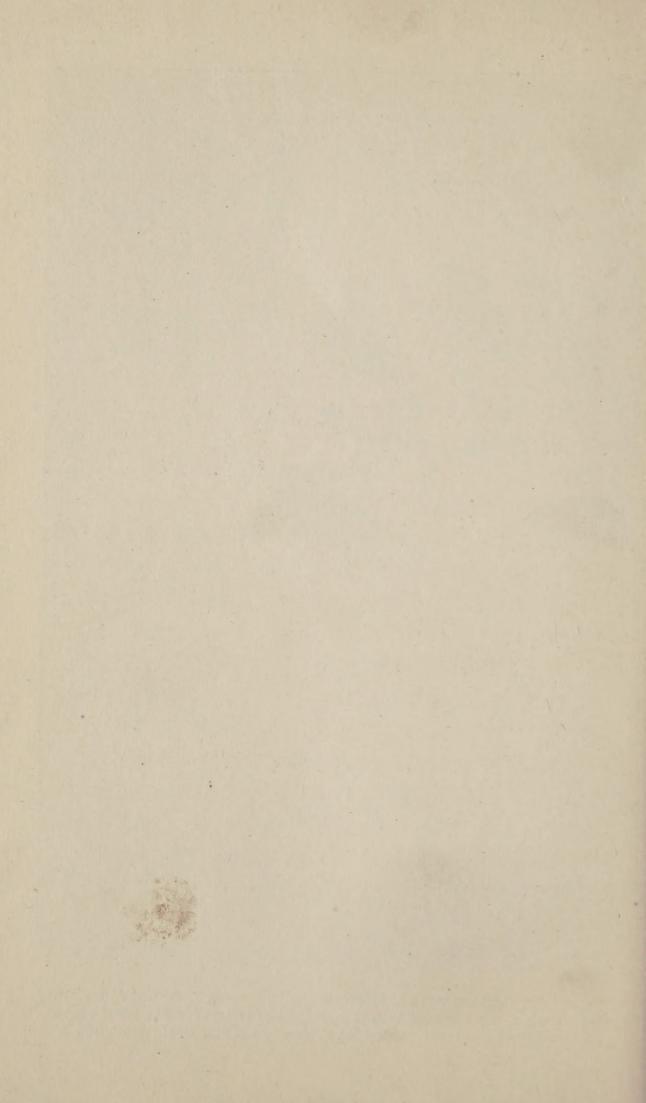
grandmother's diary, of which I spoke, written when she was a little girl, and tells of her daily life at home during the dramatic days of the Revolution. That doll has made me think that this is just the souvenir to give Williamina, since she has become the mother of the doll, that, possibly, was once mothered by the little writer of the diary. Would you value it very highly and keep it very carefully, for I have prized it greatly and would not care to see the little book go to careless or indifferent hands?"

"Indeed, I would value it the most of anything I have," and Williamina's eyes shone with delight. "But," and she hesitated, "you—you surely do not mean me to keep this precious little book that your own great-grandmother wrote when she was a little girl, do you?" and her eyes turned questioningly to the kindly old face.

"Yes," smiled Mrs. Rosewood. "I give you the book to keep. I have long wished to give the book to some little girl that I felt sure would appreciate and care for it. It will tell you something of how a brave little girl lived



"BUT," AND WILLIAMINA HESITATED, "YOU—YOU SURELY DO NOT MEAN ME TO KEEP THIS PRECIOUS LITTLE BOOK THAT YOUR OWN GREAT-GRANDMOTHER WROTE WHEN SHE WAS A LITTLE GIRL, DO YOU?"



in those long-ago days. With my love," and, lifting the book up tenderly, she placed it in Williamina's hands.

"Thank you! Thank you so much! You could not have given me anything that I should love to have more than this dear old book," and Williamina, her face flushing and her eyes sparkling, took the little book. "I'd love to sit right down now and read it," and she opened the book reverently and softly, awed by the thought that the little girl who wrote it had lived so many years ago, and looked wonderingly on the quaint, faded writing within.

"Now," and Mrs. Rosewood lifted her eyes to the faces of the others, "if each of you will step up to the bedside in turn, I will hand each one a memento, of little value in itself, but which I know you will prize, because it will always remind you of the dear old house and of your visit here. Constance, you first. This," and she lifted out of the casket and placed in Constance's hand a delicate bit of old lace and linen, "was my great-grand-mother's wedding handkerchief, used only on

her wedding day and then placed away among her treasures to be kept as a sacred memento. I know you will prize it because of its tender associations."

Thus, one by one, Mrs. Rosewood placed in the hands of each girl and boy some little memento of her past, fragrant with old-time memories, of little value in itself, but to be always cherished by the girl or boy receiving it, as a souvenir of the quaint old house and its lovable mistress.

"I think," and Aunt Betty glanced a little anxiously at the face of Mrs. Rosewood, when the last memento had been handed out, "that we have troubled Mrs. Rosewood enough for one day and had better be on our way. You know, we haven't begun the treasure-hunt yet!"

"But—but we need to begin it right here," answered Constance, her eyes on the casket. "If Mrs. Rosewood will only be so good as to let us examine the old casket closely. We think there might be some secret hiding-place in it, a false bottom or something, where the key to the torn bit of parchment that tells

where the treasure was hid, might be concealed. Can we?" and her eyes turned longingly to the sweet old face.

"I once thought the same," smiled Mrs. Rosewood; "and so I took the casket to an expert cabinet-maker and had him take it all apart and examine each piece of wood separately."

"And you found no secret hiding-place?" and Constance's face showed her disappointment.

"Not a sign of one."

"O, dear! And I felt almost sure! Why, I dreamt only last night that we found the key in the bottom of that very casket. I'll never put any faith in dreams again."

"But, have you ever knocked a hole in the bottom of the big chimney down in the cellar, to see if there might not be a secret treasure-vault in it? asked Ray, his eyes glowing. "It's big enough to have a good-sized room in it!"

"No, that is one place where no one has looked, so far as I know," laughed Mrs. Rosewood.

"And can we knock a hole in it, just big enough to see?" queried Ray eagerly.

"I am afraid you might knock the old house down about my ears—But, wait," and Mrs. Rosewood paused a moment, while her face sobered. "The base of that chimney certainly does look larger than there is any need of its being. There might be something in what you say, there might be something in it; and it will harm nothing to try-Yes," and her face flushed faintly, "you can try the old chimney, if you will get Mr. Davis, one of the men in the house," and the flush deepened, as she thought of why the men were there, "to do the work. He is a stonemason by trade and will do the work safely. I never thought I could have even a flicker of hope again; and here I am getting almost as excited over that old chimney as is Ray himself," and she smiled whimsically.

"'Hope springs eternal in the human breast!" quoted Aunt Betty. "And, I fancy, it is a good thing that it does. Now, before we go, I should like another look at that torn bit of parchment, that has so safely guarded

the secret of the hidden treasure for so long a time. I wish to compare it with my copy, to make sure that the one I have is absolutely correct."

"Take it with you," smiled back Mrs. Rose-wood. "You are welcome to all the information you can get out of it," and she lifted the old parchment out of the casket and handed it to Aunt Betty.

"Thank you. I will see that it is returned safely. Now, we must be going. You have given us a delightful time; and, in the names of all the girls and the boys, I thank you. Come," and Aunt Betty, with an anxious look at the white face on the pillow, which was beginning to show the strain of the already too prolonged visit, hurried the young people out of the sick-room.

"Now, for the big chimney in the cellar," whispered Ray excitedly, the moment the door of the sick-room closed behind them. "It's our only hope now."

"Yes," assented Aunt Betty. "We will try the big chimney next; but I have little faith in it. Now, if you will wait in the parlor, I

will get Mr. Davis," and she hurried away to find the two men left to guard the interests of Dean Alton, while the children entered the parlor and there impatiently awaited her return.

### CHAPTER XX

#### THE OLD CHIMNEY

IN five minutes Aunt Betty was back with Davis, armed with the needed tools. She at once led the way down into the cellar.

"By George, she is a big one!" exclaimed Mr. Davis, the moment he caught sight of the huge base of the great chimney. I don't wonder you think there may be a secret chamber hidden inside of it. It's big enough to hide one, that's certain. But, we'll soon see. Now, for the solving of the mystery of the Great Chimney!" and, picking up a large hammer, he began pounding with it on the chimney, at the same time holding his ear close to the stonework and listening intently. "Sounds solid," he said, a look of disappointment on his face, after he had pounded on various parts of the chimney. "I am certain I could

tell by the sound, if I struck a hollow spot."

"But you have only pounded low. Pound up higher, as high as your head!" cried Ray.

"All right, son," laughed Davis, straightening up and beginning to pound along the face of the chimney at about the height of his head.

Suddenly, when midway across the broad face, he clapped his ear close to the chimney and listened intently, as he struck a stone near his head a violent blow with the hammer.

"What is it? What is it?" cried the excited Ray, pressing close to Mr. Davis, while the others crowded around the two, Jennie almost yelling: "Have you found it? O, have you found it?"

"Well, it certainly does sound hollow," answered Davis, as he struck the chimney a hard blow. "Right here, alongside of my head. By George, I hope it is the secret treasure-vault! I hate like sin to see Mrs. Rosewood turned out of her old home. Well, 'twon't take long to find out. Hand me that chisel," and he pointed to a heavy chisel that lay among the little pile of tools that had been dropped on

the floor of the cellar, when he began pounding on the chimney with the hammer.

Ray and Arthur both made so sudden a jump for the chisel that their heads came together with a thump that sounded like the crack of a bat on a baseball; but each was so excited that he never felt the bump—until afterwards. Ray secured the chisel and quickly handed it to Mr. Davis, who at once began chipping pieces of stone and mortar out of the chimney at the spot where the stonework had sounded hollow.

The chimney was very solidly made and the digging of a hole through its hard masonry was a slow and difficult job, even for a skilled mason; but, at last, the excited and impatient children saw the chisel, at the stroke of the hammer, suddenly shoot forward and almost disappear into the hole made in the chimney and knew that the hollow within had been reached. Davis, now almost as excited as the children, redoubled his efforts; but, for a good five minutes, the hard stone resisted his hammer and chisel.

This was an exciting five minutes for our

young friends. Even Aunt Betty's face whitened under the stress of their slow passing. What would the opening of the hollow within the chimney reveal? Would they find the long-lost treasure within? Was the dear old home of Mrs. Rosewood to be saved at last? No one spoke. Every eye was on Davis. At every stroke of his hammer each strained forward; and, when, at last, the resisting rock gave way and fell inward into the hollow, all jumped, as if moved by the same shaft of machinery, and, pressing close to the opening, endeavored to look within.

"Room! Give me room!" cried Davis excitedly, as he thrust one of his long arms into the hole and endeavored to search the hollow within with his hand.

"Is—is the treasure there? O, tell us quick!" and Williamina, almost breathless with excitement, caught hold of the free arm of Davis and began jerking it violently.

"A light! Quick, someone bring me a candle! The hollow is so large that I cannot feel top or bottom or sides with my hand and so dark I cannot see what is inside. Someone hurry and get a candle," and Davis turned impatiently to the crowding, questioning children.

Constance and Mildred both raced up the stairs after candles; and, in three minutes, the excited girls were back, each with a candle in her hand.

The hole that Davis had dug through the thick wall of the chimney was nearly round and some eighteen inches in diameter, large enough for a small boy to crawl into; and, the moment the girls were back with the candles, Aunt Betty turned to George, the smallest boy present.

"Here, take the candle, George, you are the smallest," and she lighted one of the candles and handed it to him; "and crawl into the hole and find out what is inside. Davis will give you a boost."

"O, let me, let me go!" cried Ray and Arthur, both jumping up and down with excitement and each making a grab for the candle.

But George was too quick for them. He seized the candle out of Aunt Betty's hand

and turned to Davis, who stood, with the other

candle lighted, peering into the hole.

"Quick, give me a boost up to the hole!" he cried, holding up the candle in a hand that trembled with the excitement of that exciting moment so violently there was danger of his shaking the light out.

"Reckon I'd better," Davis answered; "for I can't see nothing inside but a big hole. Here we go, son. Now let out a whoop, if you find the treasure," and, catching George up in his strong arms, he thrust him headfirst into the hole.

George held the candle out in front of him and crawled slowly into the hole, until all of his body down to his knees had disappeared to the excited eyes of his companions. Here he remained motionless for a minute, then, with a yell of fright and violent kicks backward, he projected himself out of the hole so suddenly that he tumbled feet first into the arms of the startled Davis, who, in his excitement, had crowded up close to the hole.

The boys yelled, the girls jumped backward and screamed; for George's startling exit was

followed instantly by a huge gray rat that made a wild leap outward and landed plump on the breast of Jerry and almost on top of the little black kitten, the boys' mascot, which he held in his arms.

Jerry jumped and yelled. The black kitten spit and jumped.

Williamina stood nearest to Jerry, and the frightened kitten landed on one of her shoulders. She thought it was the rat; and, throwing up both her hands, all forgetful of the precious doll she held in her arms, she screamed at the top of her voice.

The doll tumbled from her arms and fell to the hard floor of the cellar, striking on its head and breaking into a dozen pieces.

For a brief minute all was confusion; and the girls were half-way up the cellar stairs before the loud laugh of Davis and the scoffing shout of the boys: "It was only a rat!" recalled them partially to their senses.

Aunt Betty, the moment she had recovered from the start George and the rat had given her, seized the frightened boy by both of his shoulders, shook him violently and demanded to be told what it was that he had seen inside the chimney.

But George, who still trembled from his sudden fright, could give little information. The light of the candle had showed him a long narrow opening; and then the rat had jumped straight at his face—and he had come out!

"O, it is the secret chamber! It must be the secret chamber!" cried Constance, who was the first of the girls to recover the full use of her senses. "Quick, somebody crawl into the hole and see if the treasure is in there!"

"Who'll volunteer?" and Aunt Betty glanced suggestively toward Ray and Arthur.

For a moment both boys hesitated, their eyes glancing uneasily into the dark depths of the hole, then Ray straightened up.

"Shucks, 'twas only a rat! Give me the candle," and, stepping up to Davis, he took the lighted candle from his hand. "Now, boost me into the hole."

Davis boosted him; and he, too, disappeared into the hole, all but his legs and feet below his knees.

For three or four minutes the girls and the boys and Aunt Betty and Davis stood watching those two projecting feet, almost breathless with excitement. No one spoke and no one moved; but all kept their eyes steadfastly on those two feet, the barometer of their hopes. Then slowly the feet began to move backward; and Ray crawled out of the hole. When he landed on his feet outside, his head and shoulders were covered with dust and cobwebs.

"Did you—did you find the treasure?" screamed Jennie, the moment his feet touched the floor. "Tell us—tell us quick!"

· Ray shook the dust off his head and shoulders and glowered about.

"Naw! It's nothing but a chimney hole!" and his face showed his deep disgust and dis-

appointment.

"O dear! And I felt sure that we had found the treasure at last!" and Williamina looked as if she were about to cry, then she started violently. For the first time since it had fallen, she missed the doll out of her arms. "My doll, Queen Esther! O, what has happened to her?" and she glanced wildly around. Her eyes caught sight of the body of the doll lying on the floor, the pieces of its broken head scattered all around it, and, with a cry of anguish, she caught the body up in her arms, sobbing as if her heart was broken.

## CHAPTER XXI

## HOW THE MASCOTS HELPED

THE girls all crowded around Williamina to comfort her, while Aunt Betty stooped to pick up the fragments of the head, thinking that they might be cemented together and the head made whole again. In about a minute she straightened up, a yellow, crumpled bit of old parchment in her hands, which she was smoothing out with trembling fingers and studying intently, while a look of wondering comprehension and glad surprise was overspreading her face. Suddenly she flung up her arm and waved the yellowed bit of parchment wildly around her head.

"Eureka! Eureka!" she shouted, dancing about like one suddenly gone mad. "I have found it!"

Constance was the first to recover from the 195

fright these wild words and wilder actions had caused, the first to get an inkling of what had happened, and her eyes lit up with excitement.

"Found what?" she cried, hurrying to the side of Aunt Betty. "What have you found?"

Aunt Betty calmed down at once; but her face was still radiant.

"I am sure," she said, holding out the crumpled and yellowed bit of old parchment, "that I have found the key to the torn parchment that tells where the treasure is hidden. I am quite sure I have found it; but, to make certain, let us go where there is more light," and she hurried out through the cellar door into the clear sunlight of the yard, followed by the mystified and wondering children and the equally mystified and wondering Davis.

Aunt Betty hastened to a near-by log, where the light was bright and clear, seated herself on the log, hastily took out of her pocket the torn parchment that Mrs. Rosewood had handed her just before she left her room, and, spreading it out on one of her knees, began carefully comparing it with the yellowed and crumpled piece of parchment she had picked up from the cellar floor, which she had spread out on her other knee.

The excited young people crowded close around her, each one striving to get sight of what was on that mysterious piece of parchment that had so greatly excited their friend.

For two or three minutes Aunt Betty studied the two pieces of parchment intently, paying not the slightest attention to the crowding children and their crowding questions. Then

she stood up, her face shining.

"Yes," she said, "it is the key, the key that will unlock the mystery of the hidden treasure. It must have been stuffed into the old doll head; for I found it on the cellar floor, when I stooped to pick up the pieces of the broken china head. Now," and she raised a hand warningly, as she saw the mouth of every boy and girl open ready to shoot out a question, "keep quiet, all of you, while I fit the key into the lock and solve this ancient mystery," and, taking out her note-book and pencil, she again seated herself on the log, spread out the two pieces of old parchment on her knee, one above the other, and began studying them carefully. In three minutes she looked up tri-

umphantly.

"I have it," she said jubilantly. "Just be patient for a few moments longer and I will show you how to read this old parchment that has baffled all for so many generations," and, opening her note-book, she began slowly and with much glancing from one piece of old parchment to the other, to write in the note-book, while the children stood crowding close around her, watching with fascinated eyes as she set down in the note-book the results of her studies.

"Does she mean that she has really found out how to find the treasure?" whispered Williamina to Constance, her eyes big with wonder.

"Yes," answered Constance, her voice trembling with suppressed excitement. "She means that she has found the missing key, the paper that tells how to read what is written on the torn parchment that tells where the treasure is hidden."

"O, but I am glad!" and Williamina's face

fairly shone. "Now we can find the treasure and pay off Dean Alton and save this dear old home for Mrs. Rosewood. O, but I am glad! I want to go and tell Mrs. Rosewood right now."

"No," and Aunt Betty looked quickly up.
"We must not let Mrs. Rosewood hear a word
of this, until we have found the treasure. It
would not do to raise false hopes and then
have them dashed to the ground. There
might be no treasure now, where these papers
say it is hidden. Many things might have
happened to it in the course of the hundred
and more years since it was hidden. We will
be sure that we have found the treasure before we say anything to Mrs. Rosewood about
it."

"Have—have you really found the key to what is written on the parchment? And can you read it now? And does it tell us where to look for the treasure?" eagerly questioned Ray.

"Yes, the solution is very easy, once the key is in your possession; but it would be impossible to solve it without the key. Now gather closer around me and I will show you how it goes."

All squeezed their heads together as closely as possible around the head of Aunt Betty and looked at the pieces of old parchment as if they were trying to devour them with their eyes.

"Read this," and Aunt Betty held up the torn parchment she had received from Mrs. Rosewood where all could see it.

This is what they read, written in faded ink and in the quaint script of the long ago:

## WHERE I HID THE TREASURE

North — feet, east — feet, south — feet, east — feet, — key — in—end of—of bridge,—flat rock.

49—99—45 6 feet und.

The parchment, which was a sheet some seven inches wide, had been rudely torn across, so that all of the lower inscription, ex-

cept the figures shown and the word, feet, and a part of another word had been lost.

"You will remember," explained Aunt Betty, "that Mrs. Rosewood told us that the same bullet that killed her great-great-grand-father passed through the wallet in his pocket, which contained this parchment, and destroyed part of the sheet, leaving it as you see it now. Evidently the lower inscription was the key, by the aid of which the upper inscription could be read. Now," and she held up the yellowed piece of parchment she had found, crumpled up in a tight wad, on the floor of the cellar, "read this."

The piece of old parchment was some six inches square, yellowed with age and covered with innumerable creases from the crumpling it had received; but its faded writing, evidently in the same hand as the writing on the other parchment, could still be plainly read.

The excited children now all fixed their eyes on this old bit of parchment, even Davis bent over the heads of the others to get a good look at it. This is what they read, written near its center:

KEY TO WHERE I HID THE TREASURE

"Well, I don't see how that helps any," complained Ray disappointedly. "It is just a lot of figures and words and dashes that don't make any sense no matter how you read them."

"O, I see! I see how it goes!" cried Constance exultingly. "The dashes in the writing on the torn parchment show where figures and words have been omitted; and the key contains the omitted words and figures."

"Right," smiled Aunt Betty. "Now," and she tore a leaf out of her note-book, "here, on this paper, I have supplied the missing words and figures, as given in the key; and this is the result," and she held the leaf up where all could read it, her face and eyes glowing triumphantly.

All stretched their necks to the utmost, to get as near the paper as possible, and read, with eyes growing big and round with won-

# HOW THE MASCOTS HELPED 203

der and joy, the following, that Aunt Betty had written on the leaf torn from her note-book:

## WHERE I HID THE TREASURE

North 49 feet, east 99 feet, south 45 feet, east 18 feet from keystone in east end of arch of bridge, 6 feet under flat rock.

"Hurrah!" yelled Ray, the moment his eyes and brain had taken in the significance of what he saw written on the paper. "Glory be, we've got old Alton now!"

"Hush!" warned Aunt Betty. "Remember Mrs. Rosewood's condition. We must leave out all the yelling and cheering."

"But I don't just understand it yet," hesitated Williamina. "How does that piece of paper tell us where the treasure is hidden?"

"Why, it is as plain as the nose on your face," grinned Ray joyously. "You see, you start from the keystone in the east end of the arch of the bridge and measure off just as

many feet as it tells you to, in the direction it tells you to, and keep on doing it as long as it tells you to, and then you will come to a flat rock, and six feet under this flat rock is the treasure."

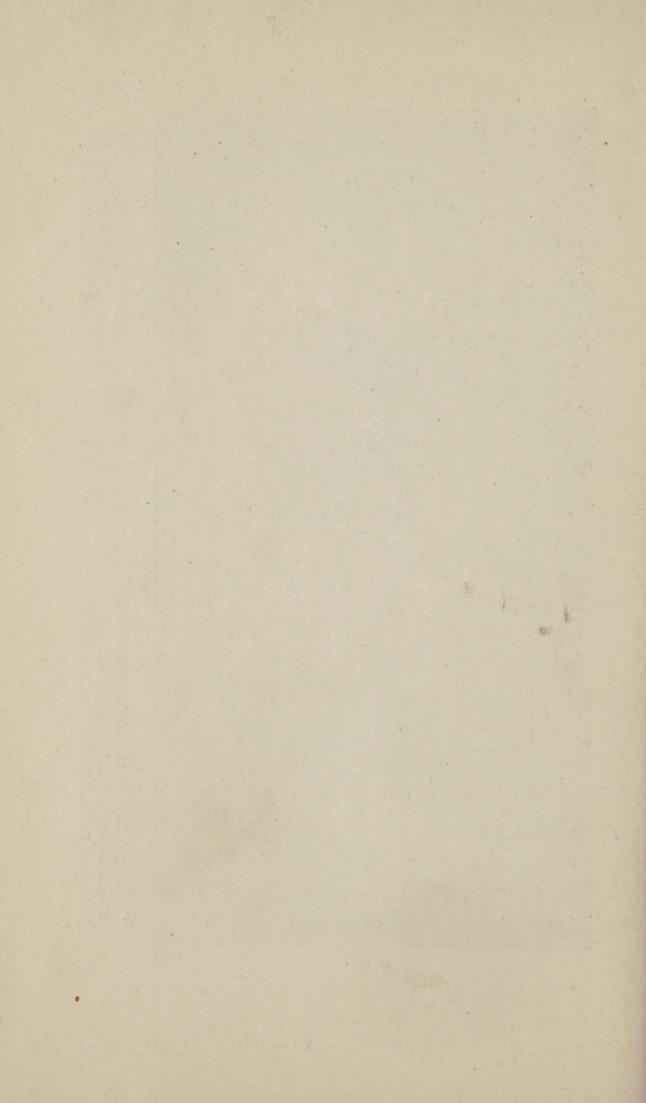
"O-o-o-o-o!" and Williamina's dark eyes grew very big and round. "Then let's hurry and measure off the distances and dig up the treasure."

"Bully idea! Let's get after the treasure," and Ray turned eagerly to Aunt Betty. "The sooner we find it the better."

"Right," she agreed. "But we must find something to measure the distances with and a spade to dig with first. You girls wait right here, while Mr. Davis and the boys and I see if we can find the needed tools. Come on," and Aunt Betty, accompanied by Mr. Davis and the boys, hurried off in the direction of the barns, leaving the anxious girls to await their return as calmly as the excited condition of their minds permitted.



"YOU SEE, YOU START FROM THE KEYSTONE IN THE EAST END OF THE ARCH OF THE BRIDGE AND MEASURE OFF JUST AS MANY FEET AS IT TELLS YOU TO, IN THE DIRECTION IT TELLS YOU TO, AND YOU WILL COME TO A FLAT ROCK, AND BURIED SIX FEET UNDER THIS FLAT ROCK IS THE TREASURE."



## CHAPTER XXII

#### THE BURIED TREASURE

WHEN Aunt Betty and Mr. Davis and the boys returned, they had a couple of spades, a pickax and a hundred-foot reel measure with them, which, gave them all the tools they needed to prosecute their search for the long-hidden treasure of Mrs. Rosewood's Revolutionary ancestors.

"Now, which of the two bridges do you suppose is meant?" queried Ray anxiously. "The one across the mill-pond, or that old stone bridge there across Silver Stream?" and he pointed to the old stone bridge that crossed Silver Stream a little below the house.

"Why, the old stone bridge, of course," answered Aunt Betty; "for the very reason that the other bridge was not built until long after the treasure was hidden."

"Then, come on!" and Ray started for the old bridge, as fast as his legs could take him, followed by the other boys and girls.

There were really two keystones in the east end of the arch of the old stone bridge; but both were small and so close together that their number did not matter.

Aunt Betty directed Ray to hold one end of Mr. Davis's long steel measuring tape directly between these two stones, while Mr. Davis, followed anxiously by every other girl and boy, measured off forty-nine feet due north, according to the compass held by Aunt Betty, who sighted for direction over the long thin tape. Here Arthur drove a sharpened stake into the ground to mark the spot. Then Aunt Betty and Ray moved up to this stake; and Mr. Davis, in the same manner as before, measured off ninety-nine feet due east from the stake. Here again Arthur drove another sharpened stake into the ground; and again Mr. Davis measured off forty-five feet due south from this stake. Arthur now drove another sharpened stake into the ground to mark this spot; and, with hands that trembled a little with the excitement that by now had got even into his own blood, Mr. Davis made the last measurement called for, eighteen feet due east from this last stake. If their measurements and directions were correct, they had now reached the exact spot where the treasure had been buried, according to the pieces of old parchment.

But no flat rock marked the spot, at least

it did not show above the ground!

"We might have missed the exact spot by a few feet," declared Aunt Betty, as she hurried up, looking anxiously around, but seeing no near-by flat rock; "or," and her face brightened, "the rock might have been removed; or time might have buried it out of sight. First, let us see if we can find such a rock near where our measurements say it should be."

Davis seized the pickax and began driving its sharp points into the ground all around the spot where Arthur had driven the final stake to mark the place where the treasure was buried. The ground was stony and he had no trouble hitting rock; but all that he struck were small and round. At last, however,

about ten feet from the marked spot, the sharp point of the pick struck a solid piece of rock that appeared to be flat to the feel of the pick.

"Quick, a spade!" he cried.

Arthur and Ray, each with a spade in his hand, jumped to the side of Davis, who jerked the spade out of Arthur's hands and began digging the dirt off the top of the rock, Ray assisting him with the other spade. In a few minutes they had uncovered the rock.

It was a flat rock, about four feet long, by three feet wide, and some eight inches thick!

"Hurrah! The rock! It is the flat rock!" and Davis, now greatly excited, dropped his spade, seized the pick and driving it into the ground under the rock, endeavored to pry it loose from its bed.

Ray hurried to his aid with his spade. Arthur seized the spade Davis had dropped and joined the two. The others formed a circle around them, a circle of as excited girls and boys as could be found anywhere in the United States. The joint efforts of Davis and the two boys were successful; and slowly the rock was

forced out of its ancient bed and hurriedly shoved to one side.

"Six feet under flat rock! Six feet down!" and now greatly excited Davis again grabbed the spade away from Arthur and began digging at the spot where the flat rock had lain, as if his life depended on the amount of dirt he threw out per second.

Ray joined him; and, together, the two made the dirt fly. Soon the hole became too deep for both to work in it together.

"I can do this kind of work better than you

can. Let me finish it," Davis said.

"You are right," panted the perspiring Ray. "Go to it," and he jumped out of the hole.

The digging was not hard and the muscular and work-hardened Davis made rapid progress.

Aunt Betty crouched near the edge of the hole, measuring tape in hands. Occasionally she dropped the tape down into the hole and noted the depth reached.

"Three feet—four feet—five feet—only six

inches more!" she called at intervals.

Suddenly the spade of Davis struck some

hard substance—stone or the treasure-chest? A few more spadefulls of dirt would show which!

Every head was now bending perilously over the hole. There was danger of all tumbling down in a bunch on top of Davis.

A dozen more thrusts with the spade; and, with a cry hardly articulate, Davis dropped the spade, reached down and gripped something with both hands. A vigorous tug or two—and he stood up, grasping in both hands a rusty, soil-stained iron chest, two feet long, a foot and a half wide and some sixteen inches deep!

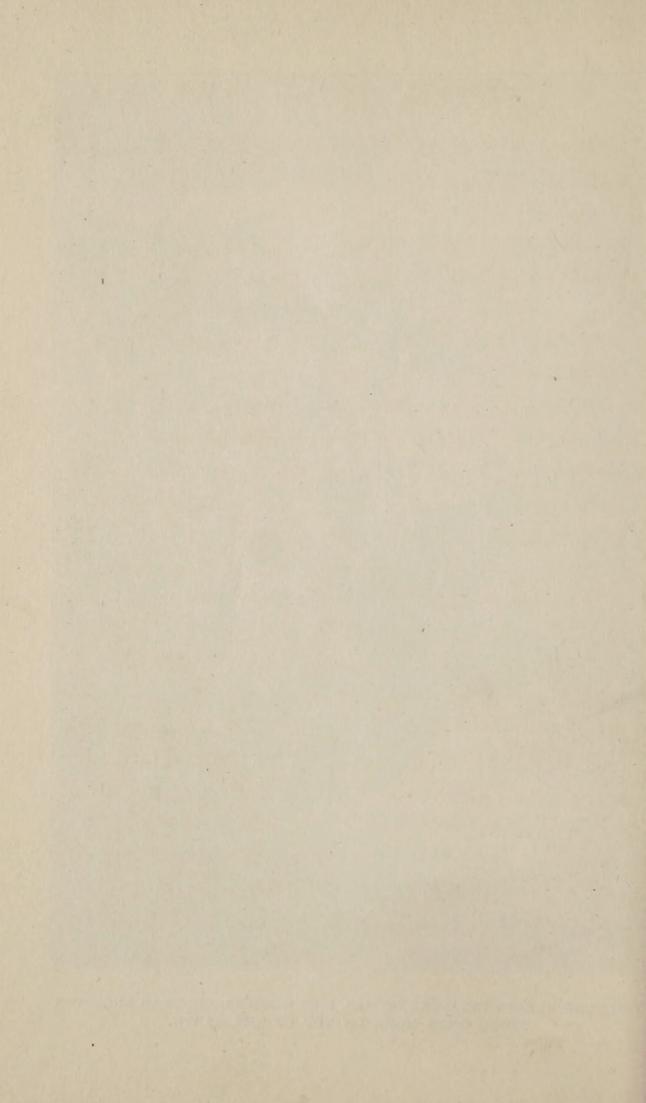
"Confounded heavy! Give me a hand," he said, his voice sounding hoarse and unnatural.

Aunt Betty reached down and caught hold of one end of the chest. Davis heaved upward; and the long-buried treasure of Mrs. Rosewood's long-dead ancestor stood once more on top of the earth.

For a moment no one spoke, no one moved; but all stood staring at the chest, fascinated by the rusty old iron box. Then Williamina looked up.



THE LONG-BURIED TREASURE OF MRS. ROSEWOOD'S LONG-DEAD ANCESTOR STOOD ONCE MORE ON TOP OF THE EARTH.



"And to think it all came from Queen Esther's broken head!" she said and laughed.

Her words and laugh broke the tense nervous strain. All laughed, some of the girls a bit hysterically. Davis crawled out of the hole and stood by the side of the chest.

"What now?" he asked, staring down at

the old chest.

"We will take the chest to the house and there decide what to do under the peculiar circumstances. Mrs. Rosewood may not be in condition to stand the excitement that news of our find would cause her; yet the chest must be opened at once and her debt to Dean Alton paid as soon as possible, if we would save the old home for her. Give me a hand, Mr. Davis,' and, bending down, Aunt Betty took hold of one end of the chest, Davis a hold of the other, and, followed by the excited children, they bore the chest to the house and set it down on the floor of the long porch.

"I see that the doctor is here," said Aunt Betty, glancing toward an automobile that stood near the porch. "We will let him decide whether or not it would be safe to tell Mrs. Rosewood the good news now. Wait here and I will find out," and she hurried into the house.

"O, but isn't this great? Just like a story in a book!" Constance said, the moment the

door closed behind Aunt Betty.

"You bet, it's great! Bully great!" agreed Ray emphatically. "It beats anything I ever read in any story book. Now if that old chest only contains enough gold and silver to pay off old Alton, we'll hold a jubilee celebration that will make the welkin ring for fair. I wish they'd hurry up and get the old thing open. I'm wild to see what's inside of it."

"And to think that we owe it all to our mascot, to the girls' mascot! I told you that it would surely bring us good luck; and it has!" There was no note of triumph in Jennie's voice, only awe and a great wonder at the mysterious ways of Providence.

"But," declared Arthur, loath to let the girls' mascot get all the honor, "it was our mascot that started the good luck. If she had not jumped out of Jerry's arms onto Williamina's shoulder, she would not have dropped the

doll, and the doll head would not have been broken, and Aunt Betty would not have found the piece of old parchment with the key on it, and we would not have found the treasure. So, I think, our mascot deserves some credit, too."

"True, what you say is true," and Constance's face became very solemn and a look of awe came into her eyes. "It really does seem as if some mysterious power had made things come out just right for us. I don't believe things could have just happened to have happened this way."

"Well, who cares how it happened, since it has happened and we have found the treasure," protested the practical Ray. "That is what we were after; and we got it. Gee, I wish Aunt Betty would hurry—A-h-h, here she comes!"

Aunt Betty, accompanied by the doctor, who looked very much excited and whose eyes sought the rusty old chest the moment he stepped out on the porch, came out of the door as Ray spoke.

"Mrs. Rosewood is sleeping soundly," Aunt

Betty said; "and the doctor says she must not be awakened, that the news of the finding of the treasure must be kept from her until she gets a little stronger, that, if she were told in her present weak condition, the excitement might kill her. I have talked the matter over with him and he agrees with me, that, under the circumstances, we must take the matter in our own hands and open the chest; and, if it contains the supposed treasure and the treasure is sufficient, use it at once to save Mrs. Rosewood's home for her. The doctor will remain to witness the opening of the chest, so as to be able to attest to its contents. Mr. Davis will also witness the opening and be able to certify as to what it contains; so that we think the interests of Mrs. Rosewood will be legally safeguarded without her presence. Now, to get the excitement of the opening of the chest as far from her as possible, we will take the chest to the cellar and open it there. Give Davis a hand, Doctor."

The doctor bent and caught hold of one end of the chest, while Davis took hold of the other end; and the two men carried the chest

into the cellar and set it down on the floor.

They had no key; but the rust had done its work so well that it needed only a well-directed blow of the hammer and the chisel in the skilled hands of Mr. Davis to break the lock—and the cover hung loose on its rusty hinges.

"She is ready to open," and Davis turned to Aunt Betty.

Aunt Betty placed her hands on the cover; and then paused. It was like lifting the lid of a tomb to raise the cover of this old chest that had come to them so strangely out of a long-dead past. A moment she paused; and then, with hands that trembled, while all the others crowded close around her, straining their necks for a first glimpse within the chest, she pulled the cover slowly upward and backward, the rusty hinges creaking dismally, as if protesting against this desecration of the past—and the long-sought treasure-chest of Mrs. Rosewood's Revolutionary ancestor lay open before their eyes!

Several thicknesses of heavy cloth, now moldy and rotten with age, were pressed down

tightly on top of the contents of the old chest. Aunt Betty carefully removed the cloth; and exposed a tightly packed mass of coinlike metal, blackened and discolored by its long burial in the earth, to the eyes of the excited girls and boys.

"O, dear, and it is nothing but a dirty lot of pieces of old black metal after all!" exclaimed Williamina, almost ready to cry with

disappointment.

Aunt Betty smiled and, picking up one of the pieces of metal, scraped its edge on a stone, and then held the scraped edge up before the eyes of Williamina.

"Gold! It's gold!" she cried, as the yellow gleam, where the stone had scraped off the discolorations shone into her wondering

eyes.

"Yes," answered Aunt Betty, "these pieces of metal, discolored by their long burial in the earth, are gold and silver coins. Now," and she stood up, her face shining with the joy this fortunate ending of the search for the hidden treasure had brought her. "I do not think we had best count the coins here; but

the doctor and I will take the chest and its contents to Newburg, just as they are, to one of the banks; and there, with the aid of the bank officials, ascertain the present value of the gold and silver within the chest. Do you not think that would be the wisest course, doctor?"

"Yes," answered the doctor. "But we must start at once, if we would get there before the bank closes," and he glanced at his watch. "Hurry and get the chest into the automobile, we do not have a moment to spare."

Aunt Betty quickly closed the cover, and, with the aid of Davis, tied it securely in place with a long piece of cord wound around the chest. Then the two men lifted the chest and hurried with it to the waiting automobile. Aunt Betty and the doctor jumped into the car.

'You will hear from me to-night by telephone," called Aunt Betty, as the doctor started the machine. "To-morrow I will go to New York City to see Dean Alton," and she smiled joyously; "but I'll try and be back in time to report to you at the next meeting of

# 218 BURIED TREASURE

the Boulder Club. Good-by until then. Time is precious now."

The doctor turned on full power. The automobile leaped forward and rushed madly off in the cloud of dust and smoke.

## CHAPTER XXIII

#### DEAN ALTON AGAIN

PROMPTLY on one o'clock, on the day of the next meeting of the Boulder Club, the council-fire was lighted on the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs; and all the boys and the girls stood circled around it. But no business was being transacted and the eyes of all were turning constantly and anxiously in the direction of the Newburg road that passed the field a quarter of a mile away.

Aunt Betty had telephoned from Newburg, as she had promised, that night after she and the doctor had deposited the treasure-chest in the bank; but she had been in so great a hurry to catch the next train to New York that she had had time only to shout jubilantly: "All is well! Off for New York at once.

Back in time to be at the next meeting of the Boulder Club. Hurrah! Good-by."

And now the time of the next meeting of the Boulder Club had arrived; but Aunt Betty had not come, nor had any member of the club heard a word from her since that hurry telephone message—and there were so many things that might have happened to her that all were beginning to get very anxious because of her non-appearance.

"O dear! O dear! I do wish she would come!" fretted Williamina, as for the dozenth time she looked anxiously in the direction of the road. "Wouldn't it be just terrible, if something should happen now to keep us from helping Mrs. Rosewood?"

"Don't talk that way! Don't think such things!" protested Constance half angrily. "She will surely come. Her train is late or something. What time is it now?" and she turned anxiously to Ethel, who was the only one that carried a watch.

"Half past one," answered Ethel, glancing at her watch. "You don't suppose anything really could have happened to Aunt Betty, now do you?" and her eyes glanced questioningly around the circle of impatient faces.

"Naw," declared Ray emphatically. "She

is too careful—"

"But there might have been a train wreck or something that she could not help," interjected Jennie. She——"

"Look! Look!" yelled Arthur, pointing excitedly up the distant road. "I'll bet that's her; and she's breaking all the speed laws in creation!"

All turned their eyes in the direction of Arthur's pointing finger, where an automobile was seen coming down the Newburg road at breakneck speed, followed by a cloud of whirling dust. When directly opposite the spot where the excited girls and boys stood, the automobile suddenly stopped, a woman jumped out and then the automobile speed on, while the woman climbed the fence and hurried toward them.

"It is she! It must be Aunt Betty!" yelled Ray; and all the girls and boys began hurrahing and yelling and swinging their hands around their heads and jumping up and

down, while the woman thrust her hand into the bosom of her dress and pulled out a small bundle of flat-folded papers and began waving it excitedly around her head.

"It is Aunt Betty!" and, with a wild whoop, Ray started to meet her as fast as his legs could take him, followed by all the other yelling

girls and boys.

"Did you pay off Dean Alton?" panted Constance, the moment she reached Aunt Betty's side.

"Have you saved the old home for Mrs.

Rosewood?" implored Williamina.

"Was there enough gold and silver to pay off everything?" besought Ray.

"Yes—yes—yes," laughed Aunt Betty, pushing the excited children from her with both hands. "But not another word, not another word until we reach the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs."

"Then, hurry," and Constance caught hold of one of Aunt Betty's hands and Ray grabbed the other and the two started on the run with her for the great rock

"Now tell us all about it," demanded Con-

stance, as Aunt Betty unused to such rapid movements, sank pantingly down on the Great Council-Stone of the Dead Chiefs.

"Yes, yes; and please hurry," and Williamina settled down, like a happy bird, by the side of Aunt Betty.

For a moment Aunt Betty sat silent, her eyes passing swiftly around the circle of excited faces, then her whole face broke into a joyous smile and, jumping to her feet, she held up the flat-folded, official-looking bundle of papers.

"Here," she said jubilantly, "are the mortgage papers and their releases, signed by Dean Alton and certifying that all Mrs. Rosewood's indebtedness to him has been paid in full, No one can take the dear old home from her now. Hurrah!" and she swung the papers around her head and yelled like a happy schoolgirl; and all the girls and the boys jumped to their feet and yelled with her.

"What did Dean Alton say when you paid him off?" Constance asked, when the yelling had subsided. "Was he mad? I'd like to have seen his face, when you told him you had come to pay Mrs. Rosewood's indebtedness to him."

"Well," grinned Aunt Betty happily, "he certainly was disappointed; for he had been wanting the old place for a long time and he thought he had it sure at last. He remembered me," and her eyes twinkled; "for, the moment I entered his office and he looked up, he frowned and his little eyes snapped angrily and he asked shortly: 'well, what can I do for you?'; and then his eyes turned inquiringly and a little apprehensively to the lawyer who accompanied me.

"'You can get out all the papers relating to Mrs. Rosewood's indebtedness to you,' I answered. 'I am here to pay you in full in behalf of Mrs. Rosewood, who is too ill to come herself.'

"Dean Alton sat up very straight in his chair and his face showed great surprise and bitter disappointment; and, if looks could have stabbed me, I would have had a dagger thrust from each of his eyes.

"'Mrs. Rosewood must have come into a sudden and unexpected inheritance, since your

last visit here, when I understood from you that she was a pauper,' and his thin tight-drawn lips showed his upper teeth in a smile that he doubtless meant to be sarcastic, but which was wolfish.

"'I am not here to discuss how she got the money,' I answered bluntly, for his words and manners angered me; 'but to pay you whatever she owes you. Kindly give the matter your immediate attention.'

"'You have the cash with you?"

"'Yes.'

"He wheeled in his chair and gave a clerk instructions to get the necessary papers; and the business was soon transacted; and the old home of Mrs. Rosewood saved from his greedy clutches.

"This is something of a surprise to me,' he said, when the money had been paid over and the last formality complied with. I had supposed that Mrs. Rosewood had exhausted all her funds—'

"'And so you took advantage of her unfortunate condition,' I snapped out. 'You must be proud of your chivalrous action!' "'I was within my rights. I only did what the justice of the law bade me to do,' he retorted, biting out each word angrily. 'May I have the pleasure of wishing you a good day?'

"'The pleasure is mutual. Good day,' and my lawyer and I walked out of the office, the precious papers safely in our possession."

"Bully for you! Three cheers and a tiger for Aunt Betty!" and Ray jumped to his feet

and led the cheering enthusiastically.

"And is there any gold and silver left?" inquired Williamina anxiously, when the cheering had quieted down. "Enough so Mrs. Rosewood will have plenty to live on for the rest of her life?"

"Some of the old coins in the chest have become very rare and are now worth much more than their face value, so that the bankers could not give a definite estimate of the value of the contents of the chest; but they willingly advanced me enough to pay all her indebtedness and assured me that the balance left would be ample to keep her in comfort all the rest of her life."

"O, I am so glad! But," and Williamina

jumped to her feet, her eyes shining, "has any one told Mrs. Rosewood the good news yet?"

"No, I wished to place the papers, showing that her home was free, in her hands before telling her of her good fortune; and I thought it would be the right thing to have you all with me, when I did this and told her how her home had been freed from the clutch of Dean Alton by our almost miraculous discovery of her ancestor's long-hidden treasure."

"And can we tell her now?" and Constance was on her feet, followed by all the others, who crowded excitedly around Aunt Betty. I am sure it will do her more good than all the doctor's medicine in the world."

"I think we can," and Aunt Betty's face showed almost as much excitement as did the faces of the children. "That was the doctor, who brought me from Newburg; and he has gone to the house to make things ready for our coming."

"Then, let's be going!" and Williamina and Jennie each excitedly caught hold of a hand of Aunt Betty and began pulling her in the direction of Mrs. Rosewood's house.

228

"Never was more willingly led anywhere in my life," laughed Aunt Betty, yielding to the soft pressure of the urgent little hands. "Come on, everybody. The going is fine," and the joyous Boulderites set out, en masse, on their mission of hope and happiness to dear old Mrs. Rosewood.

## CHAPTER XXIV

## "ALL IS WELL THAT ENDS WELL"

WHEN Aunt Betty and her young friends reached the General Knox Headquarters House, they found the doctor standing on the long porch, impatiently awaiting their coming, his kindly face glowing with gratification over the promised happy outcome of all of Mrs. Rosewood's troubles.

"Mrs. Rosewood is better, much better," he called, rubbing his hands together briskly in front of him, as they approached the stoop. "Alas, I fear your coming, with your wonderful news, will rob me of a patient!" and he smiled, as if losing patients was one of the most pleasant happenings of his life. "You can walk right in. I have told her of your coming; and she is very impatient to see you. I think her suspicions have been aroused. You

see, I could not keep some of the good news from squeezing out through my face and eyes," and his smile broadened into a grin, as he swung open the door and led the way into the house.

Mrs. Rosewood sat propped up in her bed, with many soft pillows at her back, a slight flush of excitement on her fine old face and a twinkling brightness in her eyes. She greeted them all warmly; and then, at the slight pause that came after the greetings were over, she looked up smilingly into Aunt Betty's face.

"Well, what is it?" she asked. "I know from your faces that you have something good to tell me; but I can't imagine what it can be, unless—" and her face clouded for a moment—"you have found the ideal home for dependent old women that some of my friends have been kind enough to assure me really exists, where—"

"You are a thousand miles off the track!" broke in Ray impetuously. "We've found something that knocks that home-for-dependent-old-women idea ten thousand miles higher than a cocked hat! We—Huh, I almost

told you!" and he clapped both hands over his mouth and looked appealingly to Aunt Betty.

Mrs. Rosewood started slightly at the words of Ray and turned a bit impatiently to Aunt Betty.

"Why all this mystery?" she demanded, with mock severity. "One might almost imagine, from your looks and acts, that you had found the illusive hidden treasure of my unfortunate ancestor. Well, it certainly would be a great find for me these days!" and she sighed regretfully.

"Why, we—we—that is just what we——"
The hand of Constance, clapped swiftly over the mouth of Williamina, was just in time.

Again Mrs. Rosewood started and flushed and looked queerly around the circle of excited faces that surrounded her bed, as if for the first time she had an inkling of what was coming; but, before she could speak, Aunt Betty stepped quickly to her side.

"Kindly examine these papers," she said, a little brusquely, and placed the little bundle of flat-folded papers in her hands. Mrs. Rosewood again gave that queer startled glance around the circle of faces; and then, slowly and with fingers that trembled, opened the papers and read, her face flushing and paling. Suddenly she looked up. She was trembling violently. The doctor hurried quickly to her side.

"I—I do not understand," she said. "What do these papers mean? Tell me, quick!" and

she turned appealingly to Aunt Betty.

"They mean, that your home is free!" cried Aunt Betty, "that no one can take it from you now! that you have paid every cent of your indebtedness to Dean Alton!"

"But how?—who?—I cannot understand," stammered Mrs. Rosewood, looking from face to face bewilderedly.

"Whoop! We found the treasure!" yelled Arthur, unable longer to repress his feelings.

"It was in Queen Esther's head!" explained the excited Williamina.

"Six feet under a flat rock, in a rusty old iron chest!" Ethel added.

"On a crumbled piece of old parchment!" exclaimed Ray.

"Hush! Hush!" cried Mrs. Rosewood distractedly, throwing up both of her trembling hands. "I cannot make head or tail out of what you are saying. Do, do tell me just what has happened and how it happened?" and she turned imploringly to Aunt Betty.

Aunt Betty seated herself by the bedside; and, with the happy young folks crowding close around her and the doctor and Mrs. Brownly as most interested auditors, she told Mrs. Rosewood all the wonderful happenings that had led up to the discovery of the old iron chest full of gold and silver coins; and of how she and the doctor, knowing how valuable every moment of time was, if they would save her home, had hurried to Newburg with the chest and had secured enough money on its contents to pay off her indebtedness to Dean Alton and to free her old home from his greedy clutches. There were tears in the eyes of Mrs. Rosewood and the look on her face did the hearts of the children good to see, when Aunt Betty completed her tale.

"May the good God bless you all!" she said, arousing herself from the trancelike condition

in which she had listened to the wondrous recital and glancing down at the papers in her lap to assure herself that it was not a dream. "I—I cannot thank you as I should," and she reached out with both hands and gripped the hand of Aunt Betty in her trembling grasp, while the tears ran down her cheeks.

"Please make no attempt to thank us, Mrs. Rosewood," smiled Aunt Betty. "We have been already more than amply repaid for all our trouble by the sight of the joy on your face and the thought that now you can spend the rest of your life in peace and comfort in the home of your fathers. We are very, very happy to have been able to have done this for you."

"I know—I understand—I appreciate it all, how much you can never know. I have felt all along that your coming would bring a blessing with it, you are so young and so full of life and hope," and she turned her wet eyes to the circle of young faces. "You have made me very, very happy."

"And in doing it we have made ourselves very, very happy," smiled Constance; "so I

don't see why you should thank us any more

than we should thank you."

"And to think," said Aunt Betty, her face sobering, "if we had not found that china doll head in the ruins of the old Ettrick House, we never would have discovered the key; and, without the key, we never could have found the treasure. It really does seem as if your good angel had guided us, as if things had not just happened to have happened this way."

"And just when the treasure was needed most," supplemented Constance. "It has all been as wonderful as a story in a book."

"But a heap more interesting," declared Ray. "Now, I wonder how that piece of old parchment, with the key written on it, ever got into that old doll head. It was a curious place in which to hide a thing like that."

"I know—at least I think I know," and Williamina's face flushed with eagerness. "Yesterday I was reading in the diary your great-grandmother wrote, when she was a little girl, and which you gave to me," and she turned to Mrs. Rosewood, her eyes shining, "and I came across something written there

that I am sure explains how the parchment got into Queen Esther's head. I brought the diary with me on purpose to read it to you; but, in the excitement, I forgot all about it until Ray spoke," and, thrusting her hand down into the bosom of her dress, she pulled out the old book and began carefully turning over its aged pages. "Here it is," she said, at length. "Now listen," and she read slowly, as follow:

"'August 16, 1779—This day Molly Ettrick and her brother, Tom, came to play with me, and we did have great sport with our dolls, until Tom did frighten Black Tobby, the housecat, so that he jumped suddenly upon my shoulder and did give me so great a fright that I droped Queen Esther and she did break a little hole in the back of her head and I cried sorely; but Tom only laughed and bade me stuff old paper into the hole to keep the head from breaking more and to pretend that Queen Esther had been to the war to nurse General Washington's soldiers and had got shot in the back of the head; and so I did find a piece of paper in my dear mama's letter

casket and did crumple it all up and thrust it into Queen Esther's head; and we did have great sport playing that Queen Esther was a war-nurse and had been terribly hurt while caring for General Washington's soldiers. O, I do wish this cruel war would end and my dear papa would come back! I have no one to love me now that dear mama has gone, but Queen Esther—and now she has a hole in the back of her head!'

"There are a number of spots that look like tear stains and many ink blots on the page," and Williamina looked up from the long-agowritten page of the old diary, tears of sympathy in her own eyes.

"Poor, poor little motherless girl!" Mrs. Rosewood said softly, "motherless and father" less, too, although she evidently had not yet

been told of the death of her father."

"But-but, how do you suppose the doll head got into the old Ettrick House?" queried Ray wonderingly. "Say, but it is queer how things are turning out!"

"O, the diary explains that, too!" and Williamina excitedly turned over another page in the old book; "for the very next day she went to visit Molly Ettrick and this is what hap-

pened:

"'August 17,1779—This has been a most terrible day. In the afternoon I did go to visit Molly and Tom, taking Queen Esther with me; and, for a time, we did have great sport playing that Tom was a wicked British officer who had fallen in love with Queen Esther and was trying to steal her away from us; and he did steal her and ran off with her and hid her; and then he did climb a great tree to hide from us and fell down and hit his head so hard on a stone that he lay dead when Molly and I ran screaming to him; and then everybody cried and I ran home; and dear Tom is dead and cannot play with us any more; and Queen Esther is lost! O, how I wish dear mama was here to comfort me!"

Williamina closed the little book and slipped it reverently back into the bosom of her dress.

For a minute no one spoke; and there were tears in the eyes of each of the girls, and the boys rubbed their faces suspiciously with their

fists, as all thought of the motherless and fatherless little girl mourning all alone in the big house over the loss of a dear playmate and her loved doll, Queen Esther, forgetting, for the moment, the long, long years that had passed since the little hand had written the last pathetic words with which Williamina had closed her reading from the diary. Mrs. Rosewood was the first to break the silence.

"How strange!" she mused, a look akin to awe coming into the kindly eyes. "The doll head really did belong to my great-grandmother! Poor, unfortunate, orphaned, little girl! Her sorrows began early. And to think that she, in the Providence of God, was to be the means of restoring to me, through you dear children, the home of her ancestors and of mine!"

"And that a black cat should have jumped on her shoulder and frightened her, so that she dropped the doll and broke it, so that she could stuff that piece of old parchment into the head; and that now, after so many years, another black cat should jump on Williamina's shoulder and frighten her, so that she dropped the very same doll again and broke it, so that we could find the very same piece of old parchment that she had stuffed into the broken doll head and which told how to find the hidden treasure. I tell you it all is mighty queer; and I should not be at all surprised to find that this black kitten was the great-great-great-great-great-grandchild or something of that other black cat that jumped on—"

"O, do shut up! Or we'll all go daft over your black cats," and Constance clapt a swift hand over the imaginative Arthur's mouth. "Let's all be glad that it happened as it did and not bother any more over how it hap-

pened."

"But—but," and the tears came into Williamina's eyes again. "I wish it all might have happened without breaking Queen Esther's head all to smash. I did just love that doll!"

Aunt Betty and the doctor exchanged quick smiling glances and the doctor arose and hurried from the room. In two minutes he was back, carrying a package carefully wrapped up in paper in his hands, which he gave to Aunt Betty, who at once handed the package

## 'ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL 241

to Williamina and bade the wondering girl to open it.

"O, what can it be?" and in a moment Williamina's swift fingers had untied the strings and tore off the paper, bringing to light a pasteboard box, some two feet long by six inches wide. "Dear me, what can it be?" and Williamina' stared down blankly at the box.

"Open it! Open it, you chump, and see!" cried Arthur impatiently, while all the others crowded around Williamina.

Williamina pulled off the cover of the box and glanced within.

"O-h-h-h!" and, with a look of rapture on her face, she thrust both hands down into the box and pulled out Queen Esther, looking as sound and as whole as when new, and hugged and kissed her as only a very happy little girl could.

"O, how did you do it?" and she turned eyes swimming with glad tears to the smiling Aunt Betty.

"I had picked up all the pieces of the broken head from the cellar floor and put them into my pocket, before I found the piece of parchment," answered Aunt Betty; "and, when we started for Newburg in such a hurry with the chest, I caught up the doll's body; and, when I got to Newburg, I gave the body and the pieces of the head to the doctor and asked him of he would try and get the doll fixed up all right again. He turned them over to the doll hospital; and you have the result in your arms. I thought a doll with such a wonderful history ought to be preserved."

"O, you are a dear!" and Williamina's eyes glowed with admiration and affection. "And I love you next to Queen Esther herself. I will keep Queen Esther as my most precious

treasure as long as I live."

"Now," and the doctor spoke authoritively, when the excitement over the rehabilitation of Queen Esther had quieted down. "I think Mrs. Rosewood has had enough excitement for one day and we had better all leave her alone with her happiness. I am sure that now she will be almost a well woman by morning."

"I will! Indeed, I will!" and Mrs. Rose-wood's eyes shone with renewed hope and life. "I did not suppose I ever could be as happy

## ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL 243

again as I am now. But doctor is right. The excitement and the happiness have been almost too much for me; and I must ask you to leave me now; but, when I am well, we'll have a celebration that will make the old house ring. Now, you will excuse me if I say goodby to you all at once," and she sank back on the soft pillows of the bed, wearily, but with a wondrous look of content and happiness on her face, as the doctor and Aunt Betty and the young folks, waving her good-by, went joyfully from the room.

**FINIS** 











LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

00024626581